

Table of Contents

Page

Part One: The Case for the Bible

Chapters

Introduction	1
1. The Uniqueness of the Bible	4
a. Its Continuity	4
b. Its Circulation	6
c. Its Survival	7
d. Its Teachings	9
e. Its Influence on Civilization	10
2. How We Got the Bible	11
a. Who Decided What to Include?	12
b. Tests for Inclusion in the Canon	12
c. The Canon Recognized	14
3. Is the New Testament Historically Reliable?	16
a. The Bibliographical Test	16
b. The Number of Manuscripts	17
c. The Accuracy of the Manuscripts	17
d. The Internal Evidence Test	18
e. Is the Document Free of Known Contradictions?	19
f. Did the Writer Use Primary Sources?	22
g. External Evidence	23

h. Supporting Evidence of Early Christian Writers	23
i. Early Non-Christian Confirmation	24
j. Evidence from Archaeology	26
4. Is the Old Testament Historically Reliable?	27
a. Textual Transmission	27
b. Non-Hebrew Manuscripts	28
c. Archaeological Support	28
d. New Testament Confirmation of the Old Testament	30

**Part Two:
The Case for Jesus**

1. Jesus, A Man of History	32
a. Jewish References to Jesus' Historicity	32
b. Christian Sources for Jesus' Historicity	32
2. If Jesus Wasn't God, He Deserves an Oscar	34
a. His Direct Claims to Deity	34
b. His Trial	35
c. Other Claims of Jesus	35
d. Titles of Deity	36
3. Significance of Deity: The Trilemma-Lord, Liar, or Lunatic?	39
4. Support of Deity: Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ	41
5. Support of Deity: The Resurrection-Hoax or History?	44
a. The Significance of the Resurrection	44
b. The Post-Resurrection Scene	45

6. Support of Deity: The Great Proposition	47
a. If God became a man, then we would expect Him to be without sin	48
b. We would expect some miracles	49
c. He would speak the greatest words ever spoken	49
d. He would satisfy the spiritual hunger in humanity	50
e. We would expect Him to overcome death	50
f. We would expect Him to be without sin	51

**Part Three:
The Case for and Against Christianity**

1. Is the Bible from God?	51
2. The Presupposition of Anti-supernaturalism	52
a. Old Testament Claims to Inspiration	53
b. New Testament Claims to Inspiration	53
c. Are there Errors in the Bible?	54
d. Miracles in a Christian Framework	55
3. Archaeology and Biblical Criticism	56
4. Evidence for Mosaic Authorship	57
5. Repetition of Accounts	58
a. Incongruities	59
b. Historical Skepticism	60
6. Jesus under Fire	62

Bibliography

The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict

Josh McDowell has attempted to answer some burning questions that many people have asked over and over. Is there an intellectual basis for faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, is Christianity credible? For many the resounding answer is absolutely, yes! But, along with the yes is often the inability to share with others the evidence that supports the positive affirmation of belief. This book is designed to put a platform under your feet, and give clear creditable answers to many recurring questions concerning the faith.

The author struggled early in life to find the answers to life's basic questions: Who am I? Why am I here? Where am I going? All through his teen years and into college these questions haunted him. As a result McDowell searched in all the wrong places and found no satisfaction.

One day he was confronted with a young lady who challenged him to really discover Jesus Christ intellectually. Leaving the university he headed out to take up the challenge of proving Christianity a sham. The more he researched the more troubling the evidence became.

Eventually an inner voice declared that he didn't have a leg to stand on and it continued to pound his brain. Finally realizing he was becoming intellectually dishonest, he had to make a decision, but he did not like the direction the evidence was taking him.

Finally overwhelmed with the evidence and the presence of God, Josh McDowell opened his heart to the Lord. His life has not been the same since. His journey will help many find the answers they are searching for.

The Bible says, "Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready to give an answer to every one who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear"

(1 Peter 3:15). McDowell has put together a book of apologetics, not apologies, but a defense of what he believes to be true.

The Christian faith is a factual faith that appeals to history for evidence. D.E. Jenkins wrote, “Christianity is based on indisputable facts.”¹ Clark Pinnock defines these types of facts: “The facts backing the Christian claim are not a special kind of religious fact. They are the cognitive, informational facts upon which all historical, legal, and ordinary decisions are based.”²

Luke, who wrote The Acts of the Apostles, stated that he wanted to provide an orderly and accurate historical “narrative of those things which are most surely believed among us, just as those, who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, delivered them to us” (Luke 1:1, 2 NKJV).

Among the events recorded is the resurrection of Jesus, which Luke says were validated by Jesus Christ Himself through “many infallible proofs” over a forty-day period before numerous eyewitnesses (Acts 1:3).

The goal of apologetics is not to convince a man without his participation, or contrary to his will, to become a Christian. The objective, as Clark Pinnock puts it, “strives at laying the evidence for the Christian gospel before men in an intelligent fashion, so that they can make a meaningful commitment under the convicting power of the Holy Spirit. The heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false.”³

McDowell believes that there are answers and evidence that is compelling enough to deliver an individual from the futility of skepticism, agnosticism, and atheism. The evidence can deal with the contradictions of post modernism and the deceptive emotions of mysticism.

¹ D.E. Jenkins, “Master Plan,” (Westchester, Ill., Good News Publishers).

² Clark Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation*, (Chicago: Moody, 1971).

³ Ibid.

B.C. Johnson, in *the Atheist Debater's Handbook*, throws down the challenge: "If God exists, there will be evidence of this; signs will emerge which point to such a conclusion."⁴

Josh McDowell takes on the challenges of Hume and Johnson head on. He presents in a clear and understandable manner the evidence that does exist, in the quantity and number demanded by the skeptics and much more.

The Case for the Bible

Chapter One

The Uniqueness of the Bible

⁴ B.C. Johnson, *The Atheist Debater's Handbook* (Buffalo, Prometheus Books, 1981).

It is interesting how many people own a bible, yet never open the pages to discover the great truths contained in it. For others the presence of a bible is an indication of one's ignorance and lack of understanding. If everyone and anyone would simply take the time to open the pages of Scripture they would soon discover how unique the Bible really is.

Professor M. Montiero-Williams, former Boden professor of Sanskrit, held this perspective. After spending forty-two years studying Eastern books, he compared them with the Bible and said, "Pile them, if you will, on the left side of your study table; but place your own Holy Bible on the right side –all by itself, all alone- and with a wide gap between them. For ...there is a gulf between it and the so-called sacred books of the East which severs the one from the other utterly, hopelessly, and forever.... A veritable gulf which cannot be bridged over by any science of religious thought."⁵

Unique in its Continuity

The Bible stands alone as the only book every written over a fifteen-hundred-year span. Authored by more than forty individuals from every walk of life, including kings, military leaders, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, tax collectors, poets, musicians, statesmen, scholars, and shepherds.

Not only was the Bible written by different people, but it was written in different places. We find Moses in the wilderness, Jeremiah in a dungeon, Daniel on a hillside and in a palace, Paul inside prison walls, Luke while traveling, John on an island.

The Bible was written by different people, in different places and at different times. David wrote in times of war and sacrifice, Jeremiah wrote in times of distress and isolation, Solomon in times of plenty, Paul in times of persecution and on different continents. We find the text is written in three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek.

⁵ Sidney Collett, *All About the Bible*, (Old Tappan, NJ.:Fleming H. Revell), p. 314, 315.

The styles vary as well, including poetry, narrative, song, romance, didactic treatise, personal correspondence, memoirs, satire, biography, autobiography, law, prophecy, parable, and allegory.

The Bible addresses hundreds of controversial subjects, which generate a great deal of discussion. We find the Bible dealing with marriage, divorce, and remarriage, homosexuality, adultery, obedience to authority, truthfulness and lying, character development, parenting, the nature and revelation of God.⁶

With all of this diversity the Bible still presents a single theme, developed around God's redemption of humanity. Norman Geisler and William Nix put it this way: “‘The Paradise Lost’ of Genesis becomes the ‘Paradise Regained’ of Revelation. Whereas the gate to the tree of life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation.”⁷

The main character through out the Bible is the same, He is the one and only true and living God revealed to us through the person of Jesus Christ.

As we look at the Old Testament we have the foundation for Christ, the historical books show the preparation for Christ, the poetical books aspire to Christ, and the prophecies show an expectation of Christ. In the New Testament we see the actual manifestation of Christ in the Gospels, the Acts give the propagation of Christ, and the Epistles give the interpretation of Him, and in Revelation are found the consummation of all things in Christ.⁸

We can clearly see one unified connected book. F.F. Bruce states, “Any part of the human body can only be properly explained in reference to the whole body. And any part of the Bible can only be properly explained in reference to the whole Bible.”⁹

⁶ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1999), p. 7.

⁷ Norman Geisler, *Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), p. 86.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29

⁹ F.F. Bruce, “Archaeological Confirmation of the New Testament” (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1984), P. 89.

Just the idea of having so many different authors, from so many different eras and places, agreeing totaling with each other, with no contradictions is unthinkable. Yet, that is exactly what we have with the Bible. While this is not enough to convince someone of the supernatural nature of the book, it certainly should make one stop and think.

Unique in its Circulation

The way we measure success for a book usually revolves around the number of books sold.

The best seller list allows us to see what books are at the top. It is not unusual for a good book to sell thousands of copies, some will sell in the millions, and very few will reach the ten million mark. How does the Bible compare to other books on the best seller list? None come even close to the Bible. The Bible has sold in the billions, nothing even comes close.

The Bible continues to outsell every other book. In 1998 the total number of Bibles sold and .distributed was in excess of 585 million copies, based on the United Bible Societies' report

The critic is right: "This doesn't prove that the bible is the Word of God." But it does .demonstrate that the Bible is unique

Unique in its Translation

The number of translations of the Bible is also impressive. Most books never get translated into another language. The books that do get translated usually get into just two or three languages. A very few books will get translated into the teens. The Bible has been translated into more than 2,200 languages and the number continues to grow. Between the year 2007

and 2022 the bible should be translated into every known language on earth. No other book¹⁰.comes close to comparing with the Bible in its translation activity

Unique in its Survival

It is hard to believe that the Scriptures were first written on fragile material, and had to be hand copied over and over for hundreds of years before the printing press came along. Yet the Scriptures have never diminished in style or correctness, nor have they ever faced elimination¹¹.or extinction

Bruce Metzger, a Princeton professor and one of the world's leading Biblical text critics, comments that in contrast with other ancient texts, "The textual critic of the New Testament¹²".is embarrassed by the wealth of his material

Bernard Ramm speaks of the pure accuracy and the number of biblical manuscripts: "Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved. With their *massora (parva, magna, and finalis)* they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity-scribes, lawyers, massorettes. Who ever counted¹³"?the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero or Seneca

Over the years many enemies have attempted to destroy the Scriptures to the point of annihilation. In A.D. 303, the Roman emperor Diocletian issued an edict to stop Christians from worshipping and to destroy their Scriptures. God clearly has a sense of humor and after twenty-five years along comes Constantine and orders that fifty copies of the Scriptures be .made at the government's expense

¹⁰ Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1999), p. 9.

¹¹ Ibid., p.9.

¹² Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.34.

¹³ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953), p. 230-231.

Years later, Voltaire, the noted French antagonist who died in 1778, said that in one hundred years from his time Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history. Once again God does some amazing things. Concerning Voltaire's prediction of the extinction of Christianity and the Bible in a hundred years, Geisler and Nix point out that "only fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of ¹⁴ Bibles

The bible has withstood the attacks of critics, non-believers and skeptics. From the very start men have tried to discredit, destroy and diminish the presence and power of the Scriptures. Yet it is as strong today as it has ever been. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes ¹⁵ and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and the book still lives

The Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions. The Bible is unique in its ability to stand up to its critics. There is no book in all of literature like it

Unique in its Teachings

Prophecy

The presence of prophecy sets the Bible apart from all other books. It is the only volume ever produced by man, or a group of men, in which is to be found a large body of prophecies relating to individual nations, to Israel, to all the peoples of the earth, to certain cities, and to the coming of one who was to be the Messiah. Mohammedanism cannot point to any prophecies of the coming of Mohammed uttered hundreds of years before his birth. Neither

¹⁴ Norman Geisler/ William Nix, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), p. 123,124.

¹⁵ John Lea, *The Greatest Book in the World*, (Philadelphia, n.p., 1929), p. 17-18.

can the founder of any cult in this country rightly identify any ancient text specifically foretelling their appearance.¹⁶ The abundance of fulfilled prophecy is a powerful argument .for the unique, divine authority of the Bible

History

First Samuel through 2 Chronicles gives us approximately five centuries of the history of Israel. The well known and honored archaeologist Professor Albright begins his classic essay, “The Biblical Period,” with this statement: “Hebrew national tradition excels all others in its clear picture of tribal and family origins. In Egypt and Babylonia, in Assyria and ¹⁷Phoenicia, in Greece and Rome, we look in vain for anything comparable Commenting on the reliability of the “Table of Nations” in Genesis 10, Albright responded: “It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature without a remote parallel even among the ¹⁸Greeks.... ‘The Table of Nations’ remains an astonishingly accurate document

Character

Lewis S. Chafer, founder and former president of Dallas Theological Seminary, has said, ”.“The Bible is not such a book a man would write if he could, or could write if he would The Bible does not over look the sins of its characters, even when those sins reflect badly on God’s chosen people, leaders, and the biblical writers themselves.

- The sins of the patriarchs are mentioned (Gen. 12:11-13).
- The sins of the people are denounced (Deut. 9:24).

¹⁶ Wilbur Smith, *The Incomparable Book* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Beacon Publications, 1961), p. 9-10.

¹⁷ Lewis Finkelstein, *The Jews, Their History, Culture and Religion* (3rd Ed, Vol. 1, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 222.

¹⁸ F.W. Albright, *Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1955), p. 70-72.

- King David’s adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11-12).
- The disorder within the church is clearly outlined (1 Cor. 1:11; 15:12).

The reality of the situation was not overlooked in order to paint a better picture. It presents the good with the bad without prejudice.

Unique in its Influence on Civilization

You cannot study Western civilization without understanding the impact of the Bible. And then you see how the Western civilization impacted the rest of the world. Civilization has been influenced more by the Judeo-Christian Scriptures than by any other book or series of books in the world. The Bible presents the highest ideals known to men, ideals that have molded civilization.¹⁹

Gabriel Sivan observes, “The Bible has given strength to the freedom fighter and new heart to the persecuted, a blueprint to the social reformer and inspiration to the writer and artist.”²⁰

Chapter Two

HOW WE GOT THE BIBLE

Many people have raised the question of origin, how did we get the Bible, its divisions, and the material used to compile it. The ancient documents were primarily written on papyrus, which was a very difficult material to preserve. So it is not surprising that the original manuscripts are not available. The oldest papyrus fragment known dates back to 2400 B.C. Papyrus was in common use until the third century A.D.²¹

¹⁹ Norman Geisler, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p.196-197.

²⁰

Gabriel Sivan, *The Bible and Civilization* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Jerusalem, 1973), p. 491.

²¹ Harold Greenslee, *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), p. 20.

Parchment is the name given to “prepared skins of sheep, goats, antelope and other animals.” These skins were “shaved and scraped” in order to produce a more durable writing material. F.F. Bruce adds that “the word ‘parchment’ comes from the name of the city of Pergamum in Asia Minor, for the production of this writing material was at one time especially associated with that place.”²²

Vellum was the name given to calf skin. Vellum was often dyed purple. Actually some of the documents we possess today are written on purple vellum. The writing on dyed vellum was usually gold or silver. Other writing material consisted of ostraca, which was unglazed pottery. The technical name for this is “potsherd.” This material has been found in abundance in Egypt and Palestine.

Rocks have also been used to record information. Clay and wax tablets were common as well.

The instruments used to write on these different materials consisted of chisels, metal stylus, pen and ink.

Who Decided What to Include in the Bible?

The question concerning how it was decided which books would be included in the Bible is the question of *canonicity*. Most people would want to know why some books were included in the *canon* while others were left out.

The word *canon* comes from the root word *reed*. The reed was used as a measuring rod, and came to mean “standard.”

²² F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments: How We Got Our English Bible* (Old Tappan, NJ.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1950), p. 11.

The third-century church father Origen used the word “canon” to denote what we call the ‘rule of faith,’ the standard by which we are to measure and evaluate. Later, the term meant a “list” or “index.”²³ When this is applied to Scripture, *canon* means “an official accepted list of books.”

It is important to understand that the church did not create the canon; it did not determine which books would be called Scripture, the inspired Word of God. The church simply recognized, or discovered, which books had been inspired from their inception. Another way to put it is, “a book is not the Word of God because it is accepted by the people of God. Rather, it was accepted by the people of God because it is the Word of God. That is, God gives the book its divine authority, not the people of God. They merely recognize the divine authority which God gives to it.”²⁴

Tests for Inclusion in the Canon

As we investigate the process that decided the final documents to be included in Scripture we see at least five principles that guided the recognition and collection of the true divinely inspired books.

1. Was the book written by a prophet of God? “If it was written by a spokesman for God, then it was the Word of God.”
2. Was the writer confirmed by acts of God? Frequently miracles separated the true prophets from the false ones. “Moses was given miraculous powers to prove his call of God (Ex. 4:1-9). Elijah was victorious over the prophets of Baal by an act of God on his behalf (1 Kings 18).

²³ Ibid., p. 95.

²⁴ Norman Geisler, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p. 210.

3. Did the message tell the truth about God? No book with false claims can be the Word of God. For reasons like this, the church fathers adopted the policy, “If in doubt, throw it out.” This approach made their final decisions more valid to the outsider.

4. Does it come with the power of God? “The Fathers believed the Word of God is ‘living and active’ (Hebrews 4:12), and consequently ought to have a transforming force for edification (2 Tim.3:17) and evangelization (1 Pet.1:23). The presence of God’s transforming power was a strong indication that a given book had His stamp of approval.

5. Was it accepted by the people of God? “The debate often would come back to the question of what did the people think who knew the author. So, despite all later debate about the canonicity of some books, the definitive evidence is that which attests to its original acceptance by the contemporary believers.”²⁵ When a book was received, collected, read, and used by the people of God as the Word of God, it was regarded as canonical. We can see this taking place in the Scriptures themselves. One instance is when the apostle Peter acknowledges Paul’s writings as Scripture on a par with Old Testament Scripture (2 Peter 3:16).

Some incorrect views have developed concerning this whole process. Among the incorrect views we find those who believe the church is the *Determiner* of Canon, the *Mother* of Canon, the *Magistrate* of Canon, the *Regulator* of Canon, the *Judge* of Canon and the *Master* of Canon. The correct view sees the church as the *Discoverer* of Canon, the *Child* of Canon, the *Minister* of Canon, the *Recognizer* of Canon, the *Witness* of Canon and the *Servant* of Canon.

²⁵ Norman Geisler, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p. 229.

The Canon Recognized

Athanasius of Alexandria

Athanasius (A.D. 367) gave us the earliest list of New Testament books that is exactly like our present New Testament. He provided this list in a festal letter to the churches. As he put it: “Again it is not tedious to speak of the books of the New Testament. These are, the four gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and Epistles (called Catholic), seven, James, one of Peter, two of John, three; after these, one of Jude. In addition there are fourteen Epistles of Paul, written in this order. The first, to the Romans; then two to the Corinthians; after these, to the Galatians; next to the Ephesians; then to the Philippians; then to the Colossians; after these, two to the Thessalonians, and that to the Hebrews; and again, two to Timothy; one to Titus; and lastly, that to Philemon. And besides, the Revelation of John.”²⁶ I find it very interesting to see that he believes Paul wrote the letter to the Hebrews, as I do.

Jerome and Augustine

A short time later we find Jerome and Augustine also contributed their opinion concerning the books of the Bible, defining the New Testament canon of Twenty-seven books.

Polycarp and His Contemporaries

Polycarp (A.D. 115), Clement of Alexandria (about A.D. 200), and other early church fathers refer to the Old and New Testament books with the phrase “as it is said in these scriptures.”

Ignatius

Ignatius (A.D. 50-115) wrote, “I do not wish to command you as Peter and Paul; they were apostles.”²⁷

²⁶ Athanasius, *Letters*, no. 39 (Easter 367), (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1888), p. 552.

²⁷ Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1999), P. 32.

Church Councils

F.F. Bruce states that “when at last a Church Council-The Synod of Hippo in A.D. 393-listed the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, it did not confer upon them any authority which they did not already possess, but simply recorded their previously established canonicity. Four years later the Third Synod of Carthage affirmed the same decision.

Christ’s Witness to the Old Testament

When Jesus was in the upper room with the disciples, he told them “that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the Law of Moses, and the Prophets, and the Psalms concerning me” (Luke 24:44). From this passage we see how Jesus divided up the Jewish Scriptures.

Jesus disagreed with the Pharisees concerning their oral traditions, but not with their concept of the Hebrew canon. There is no evidence of any dispute between Jesus and the Jews over the canonicity of any Old Testament book

David Dockery, Kenneth Matthews, and Robert Sloan, after reviewing the evidence in their recent book, *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*, conclude concerning the Bible’s canon: “No Christian, confident in the providential working of his God and informed about the true nature of canonicity of his Word, should be disturbed about the dependability of the Bible we now possess.”²⁸

Chapter Three

Is The New Testament Historically Reliable?

The issue here is not about inspiration, but the historical reliability of the Scripture. If we are going to be credible we must use the same criteria which are used on all historical documents to determine their reliability.

²⁸ David Dockery, *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Pub., 1994), p.77.

C. Sanders, in *Introduction to Research in English Literary History*, gives a list and then explains the three basic principles of historiography. These are the bibliographical test, the internal evidence test, and the external evidence test.²⁹

The Bibliographical Test

This test examines the textual transmission by which documents reach us. Since we do not have the original documents it is important to determine how reliable the copies are we have in comparison to the number of manuscripts and the time interval between the original and the copy.

The Number of Manuscripts and Their Closeness to the Original

F.E. Peters states that “on the basis of manuscript tradition alone, the works that made up the Christians’ New Testament were the most frequently copied and widely circulated books of antiquity”³⁰

There are now more than 5,686 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Add over 10,000 Latin Vulgate and at least 9,300 other early versions, and we have close to, if not more than, 25,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence today. No other document of antiquity even begins to compare. Homers *Iliad* is second, with only 643 manuscripts surviving.³¹

The importance of the sheer number of manuscript copies cannot be overstated. As with other documents of ancient literature, there are no known original manuscripts. However, the amazing number of copies makes it possible to reconstruct the original with virtually complete accuracy.³²

²⁹ C. Sanders, *Introduction to Research in English Literature* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1952), p.143.

³⁰ Norman Geisler, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p.385.

.Charles Leach, *Our Bible, How We Got it* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1898), p55³¹

³² Norman Geisler, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p. 386.

Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, who was the director and principal librarian of the British Museum and unquestioned as an authority stated that, “besides number, the manuscripts of the New Testament differ from those of the classical authors...In no other case is the interval of time between the composition of the book and the date of the earliest extant manuscripts so short as in that of the New Testament.”

F.J.A. Hort correctly states that “in the variety and fullness of the evidence on which it rests the text of the New Testament stands absolutely and unapproachably alone among ancient prose writings.”³³

Accuracy of Manuscripts Supported by Early Church Fathers

The citations of Scripture by the early church fathers are not primary support for the reliability of Scripture, but they do serve to show two things. First, they give overwhelming support to the existence of the twenty-seven authoritative books of the New Testament canon. Second, the quotations are so numerous and widespread that if no other manuscripts of the New Testament were available, the New Testament could be reproduced from the writings of the early Fathers alone.³⁴

Internal Evidence Test

Benefit of Doubt

John Warwick Montgomery writes that literary critics still follow Aristotle’s dictum that “the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself.”³⁵

The point is to take the document at face value and not to assume fraud or error unless the author disqualified himself by contradictions or known factual inaccuracies. The presence of

³³ F.J.A. Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (Vol. 1. New York: Macmillan Co., 1881), p.561.

³⁴ Norman Geisler, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p.430.

³⁵ John Warwick Montgomery, “Evangelicals and Archaeology.” *Christianity Today*. August 16, 1968, p. 29.

difficulties does not amount to objections. Unsolved problems are not always errors. History has shown that many objections have been removed as time produces more information and clarification.

Is the Document Free of Known Contradictions?

Dr. Gleason Archer, one of the world's most outstanding scholars on languages and apologetics, wrote concerning contradictions in the Biblical record. He states, "There is a good and sufficient answer in Scripture itself to refute every charge that has ever been leveled against it. But this is only to be expected from the kind of book the Bible asserts itself to be, the inscripturation of the infallible, inerrant Word of the Living God."³⁶

Principle #1: The Unexplained Is Not Necessarily Unexplainable.

It is a mistake to think that what has not yet been explained will never be explained. Many difficulties for which scholars once had no answer have yielded to the relentless pursuit of answers through history, archaeology, linguistics, and other disciplines.

Principle #2: Fallible Interpretations Do Not Mean Fallible Revelation

As long as imperfect human beings exist, there will be misinterpretations of God's Word and false views about His world. Science is constantly changing and what is accepted today as fact may tomorrow be trashed.

Principle # 3: Understand the Context of the Passage

Taking a passage out of context happens all too often resulting in a wrong interpretation or position. A person can prove anything by failing to keep things in context. Failure to note the meaning in light of its context is perhaps the biggest error of those who find fault with the Bible.

Principle #4: Interpret Difficult Passages in the Light of Clear Ones

³⁶ Gleason Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), p.12.

Certainly all would agree that some passages of Scripture are hard to understand. Sometimes we have a passage that seems to contradict another passage. James writes about the need for works in the life of a believer (James 2:14), while Paul writes about salvation by grace (Rom. 4:5). While this may seem like a contradiction to many, James is not contradicting Paul at all. James is speaking about the need for works as evidence of our salvation before men, while Paul is speaking about justification before God. All passages need to be compared to other Scriptures that deal with the same subject matter. This approach will greatly reduce the problems that seem to arise from certain passages.

Principle #5: Don't Base Teaching on Obscure Passages

Some Bible passages are difficult because their meanings are obscure. This is usually because a key word in the text is used only once (or rarely), and so it is difficult to know what the writer had in mind, unless it can be inferred by the context.

We should not build a doctrine on an *obscure* passage. The rule is to understand that the “main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things.” This is referred to as perspicuity (clearness) of Scripture. If something is important, it will be clearly taught in Scripture, and probably in more than one place. When something is not clear we should never conclude that it means something that opposes another plain teaching of Scripture.

Principle #6: The Bible Is a Human Book with Human Characteristics

The Bible claims that God used human personalities to receive and communicate eternal truths. Therefore, expressions of speech (such as when Jesus used exaggeration) should not always be taken literally, and then pitted against another portion of Scripture.

Principle #7: Just because a Report is Incomplete Does Not Make it False

The example in Mark 5:1 and Luke 8:26 are a prime case in point. They each speak of one demoniac, while the passage in Matthew speaks of two. The accounts are not contradictory. They are actually complimentary, supplying more information when both are taken together.

Principle #8: New Testament Citations of the Old Testament Need Not Always Be Exact

Early Christians often cited the Septuagint, which gave a slightly different wording to the same text.

Principle #9: The Bible Does Not Necessarily Approve of all It Records

It is wrong to think that everything recorded in the Bible is approved by the Bible. The Bible records the actual events without censoring the things it disapproves of. The truth of Scripture is found in what the Bible reveals, not in everything it records.

Principle #10: The Bible Uses Non-technical, Everyday Language

Just because a term in the Bible is non-scientific does not necessarily mean that the term is inaccurate. Often the writer is merely writing in terminology of the day for understanding.

Principle #11: The Bible May Use Both Round Numbers as Well as Exact Numbers

We can find the use of round numbers in ancient times as well as modern literature.

Principle #12: Note When the Bible Uses Different Literary Devices

Usually the context will determine if a passage should be taken literally or figuratively. Often the writer will use terms that point us in the right direction, like as though, and appeared as and so on.

Principle #13: An Error in a Copy Does Not Equate to an Error in the Original

When theologians talk about the inerrancy of the Scriptures, they are referring to the Scriptures as originally written, not the copies.

Principle #14: General Statements Don't Necessarily Mean Universal Promises

Critics like to point to passages that give a general statement and then point to obvious exceptions. This is simply a failure to acknowledge that the statements are only intended to be generalizations. The book of Proverbs is a good example of this point. The book is full of general guidelines not universal truths or promises.

Principle #15: Later Revelation Supercedes Previous Revelation

There is clearly progressive revelation in the Scriptures. Each stage of the progression of Scripture revealed additional information to man from God. What we have today is far greater than what Moses gave to the Jews in his day.

Did the Writer Use Primary Sources?

The writers clearly wrote from a first hand position of the events. We find the New Testament claiming this first hand position in Luke 1:1-3: *“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus.”*

In 2 Peter 1:16 we read: *“For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”*

F.F. Bruce, the former Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester, says, concerning the primary-source value of the New Testament records:

“The earliest preachers of the gospel knew the value of first-hand testimony, and appealed to

it time and again. ‘We are witnesses of these things,’ was their constant and confident assertion.”³⁷

The accounts that these writers recorded were written during the lifetime of those who were involved in the accounts themselves. As a result, scholars to day as a competent primary source document from the first century must consider the New Testament.

William Foxwell Albright, one of the world’s foremost biblical archaeologists, said: “We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80, two full generations before the date between 130 and 150 given by the more radical New Testament critics of today.”³⁸

External Evidence for the Reliability of the New Testament

The next question is, “Do other historical materials confirm or deny the internal testimony provided by the documents themselves?” Is there any evidence apart from the literature under analysis that would substantiate its accuracy, reliability, and authenticity?

Supporting Evidence of Early Christian Writers outside the Bible

Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History III. 39*, carries on the writings of Papius, bishop of Heirapolis (A.D. 130), in which Papius records sayings of “the Elder” (the apostle John): The Elder used to say this also: “Mark, having been the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he (Peter) mentioned, whether sayings or doings of Christ, not, however, in order. For he was neither a hearer nor a companion of the Lord; but afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who adapted his teachings as necessity required, not as though he were making a compilation of the sayings of the Lord. So then Mark made no mistake writing down in this way some things as he (Peter) mentioned them; for he paid attention to this one

³⁷ F.F. Bruce, *New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Downers Grove; Ill.: Inter Varsity Press, 1964), p. 33,44-46.

³⁸ William Foxwell Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (Baltimore; John Hopkins Press, 1940), p.23.

thing, not to omit anything that he had heard, not to include any false statement among them.”

The four Gospels had become so axiomatic in the Christian world that Irenaeus can refer to it [the fourfold Gospel] as an established and recognized fact as obvious as the four cardinal points of the compass.

Clement of Rome (A.D. 95) used Scripture as a reliable and authentic source.

Ignatius (A.D. 70-110). This Bishop of Antioch was martyred for his faith in Christ. He knew all the apostles and was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John.³⁹

Polycarp (A.D. 70-156) was a disciple of John who succumbed to martyrdom at eighty-six years of age for his relentless devotion to Christ and the Scriptures. The death of Polycarp is a clear testimony to his trust in the accuracy of the Scripture.

Early Non-Christian Confirmation of New Testament History

Negative Bible critics charge or imply that the New Testament documents are unreliable since disciples of Jesus or later Christians wrote them. They try to claim that no outside evidence exist from non-Christian sources. This is totally false since there is an impressive amount of material available to the honest seeker.

Tacitus

The first-century Roman, Tacitus, is considered one of the more accurate historians of the ancient world. He gives the account of the great fire of Rome, for which some blamed the Emperor Nero. His writings touch on the fact that Nero tried to pass the blame for the fire by accusing the Christians, who got their name from Christus, the one who Pontius Pilate put to death. But after his death the followers gained new momentum due to the most mischievous superstition which broke out not only in Judea, the first place of the evil, but even in Rome.

³⁹ Thomas Liplady, *The Influence of the Bible* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1924), p. 209.

The superstition mentioned by Tacitus refers to the resurrection of Jesus. Suetonius, who was the chief secretary to Emperor Hadrian, mentioned this same event. His writings confirmed other Biblical accounts as well.

Josephus

Josephus (c. A.D. 37-100) was a Pharisee of the priestly line and a Jewish historian. He records many statements that verify, either generally or in specific terms, the historical nature of both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Josephus supports the Protestant view of the canon of the Old Testament against the Roman Catholic view, which embraces the Apocrypha. His writings also confirm the New Testament reports that Jesus was a real person in the first century, that others identified him as the Christ, and that he had a brother named James who died a martyr's death at the hands of the high priest, Albinus, and his Sanhedrin.

John the Baptist

Josephus also confirmed the existence and martyrdom of John the Baptist, the presenter of Jesus. The writings spend some time on the ministry of John and his death and confirm the Gospel records.

Jesus

Josephus gave some attention to Jesus, but some dispute the text. The account given by Josephus is actually quoted by Eusebius (A.D. 325). While some would doubt the possibility that Josephus actually believed that Jesus was the Messiah, still he wrote in such a way that the implication was there.

The Acts of Pontius Pilate

Some documents from the period are referred to by name in other writings, yet have not survived over time. One such document is *the Acts of Pontius Pilate*, referred to by Justin Martyr in about A.D. 150, and by Tertullian in about A.D. 200. Justin writes:

“And the expression, ‘They pierced my hands and my Feet,’ was used in reference to the nails of the cross which were fixed in his hands and feet. And after he was crucified, they cast lots upon his vesture, and they that crucified him parted it among them. And that these things did happen you can ascertain from the ‘Acts’ of Pontius Pilate.”⁴⁰

Dr. Geisler makes this summary: The primary sources for the life of Christ are the four Gospels. However there are considerable reports from non-Christian sources that supplement and confirm the Gospel accounts. These come largely from Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Samaritan sources of the first century.

What we can determine is this;

- (1) Jesus was from Nazareth;
- (2) He lived a wise and virtuous life;
- (3) He was crucified in Palestine under Pontius Pilate, being considered the Jewish King;
- (4) He was believed by his disciples to have been raised from the dead three days later;
- (5) His enemies acknowledged that he performed unusual feats they called ‘sorcery’;
- (6) His small band of disciples multiplied rapidly, spreading even as far as Rome;

⁴⁰ Justin Martyr, “Apology.” In *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), p. 48.

(7) His disciples denied polytheism, lived moral lives, and worshiped Christ as Divine.⁴¹

Evidence from Archaeology

Here we have an accurate and exciting confirmation of many Biblical truths and accuracy.

The evidence is simply over whelming and continues to grow.

Nelson Glueck, a well-known and respected Jewish archaeologist wrote: “It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference.” He went on to assert that of “the almost incredibly accurate historical memory of the bible, and particularly so when it is fortified by archaeological fact.”⁴²

The evidence clearly states that the Biblical record is accurate and trustworthy. In order to reject the Biblical record one must also throw out all the literature of antiquity.

Chapter Four

Is the Old Testament Historically Reliable?

The Reliability of the Old Testament Manuscripts was shown to be reliable in at least three major ways: (1) textual transmission (the accuracy of the copying process down through history), (2) the confirmation of the Old Testament by hard evidence uncovered through archaeology, and (3) documentary evidence also uncovered through archaeology.

Textual Transmission

⁴¹ Norman Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids; Baker, 19980, p.384-385.

⁴² Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert: History of Negev* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cadahy, 1959), p.31.

The textual transmission is an essential element in the accuracy of the biblical record. While we do not have the original documents, we do have a large number of copies. Comparing these copies to each other gives an amazing picture of accuracy by the copyist when compared to other literature.

In 144 cases of transliteration from Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Moabite into Hebrew and in 40 cases of the opposite, or 184 in all, the evidence shows that for 2300 to 3900 years the text of the proper names in the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with the minutest accuracy.⁴³

Non-Hebrew Manuscripts

There are a number of ancient translations of the Old Testament, which provide valuable support to the text. The Septuagint preserves a textual tradition from the third century B.C., and the Samaritan Pentateuchal tradition may date from the fifth century B.C. When these two are examined, along with the Masoretic Text, we have a powerful support for the integrity of the Old Testament text. There are other documents that continue to add support and authority to the Old Testament text.

Archaeological Support

The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was thought to be a myth until evidence revealed that all five of the cities mentioned in the bible were in fact centers of commerce in the area and were geographically located where the Scriptural passage indicated. Not only are the cities real, the evidence of their destruction supports the Biblical account.

Jericho

Another so-called myth was the destruction of Jericho. During the excavations of Jericho (1930-1936) Garstang found something so startling that he and two other members of the

⁴³ Robert Dick Wilson, *Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1959), p.64,71.

team prepared and signed a statement describing what was found. Garstang wrote: “As to the main fact, then, there remains no doubt: the walls fell outwards so completely that the attackers would be able to clamber up and over their ruins into the city.”⁴⁴

Saul, David, and Solomon

Excavation has uncovered Saul’s fortress at Gibeah showing that one of the major weapons of that time was the slingshot. This not only supports the account of what David did, but also the account of Judges 20:16 that there were seven hundred expert slingers who “could sling a stone at a hair and not miss.”

One of the major accomplishments of David was the capture of Jerusalem. The Scriptures seemed to present a problem; the Israelites entered the city by way of a tunnel that led to the Pool of Siloam. The pool was considered to be outside the city walls, but excavations in the 1960’s revealed that the wall did go way past the pool supporting the Biblical record.

Solomon’s temple and its contents have shown to be correct by the excavation in the last 75 years. A article written in 1989 by Alan Millard in *Biblical Archaeology Review*, entitled “Does the Bible exaggerate King Solomon’s Wealth?” states, “Those who read the bible text and make a subjective judgment as to its reliability often conclude-and understandably so-that the descriptions of Solomon’s gold are gross exaggerations. The quantity of gold the bible claims for King Solomon is simply unbelievable, even unimaginable. We have not proved that the details in the Bible regarding Solomon’s gold are accurate. But by setting the biblical text beside other ancient texts and archeological discoveries we have shown that the biblical narrative is wholly in keeping with the practices of the ancient world, so far as we can ascertain them, not only in the use of gold but also in its records of quantities. While this

⁴⁴ John Garstang, *The Foundations of Bible History* (New York: R.R. Smith, Inc., 1931), p.146.

does not demonstrate that the account in the Bible is accurate, it does show that it is feasible.”⁴⁵

Henry Morris believes that it is no longer possible to reject the substantial historicity of the Bible, at least as far back as the time of Abraham, because of the remarkable discoveries of archaeology.⁴⁶

New Testament Confirmation of the Old Testament

Jesus stated that he believed Moses wrote the Torah; Mark 7:10; 10:3-5; 12:26. In John 5:45 Jesus states his belief that Moses wrote the Torah in very strong terms. The New Testament writers also believed that Moses wrote the Torah. John was confident that “the Law was given through Moses” (John 1:17).

PART TWO

Chapter One

THE CASE FOR JESUS

While some would speculate that Jesus is a myth or that he never existed, the evidence shows quite the contrary. The historicity of Jesus is not just a matter of curious interest for the Christian. The Christian faith is grounded in history. New Testament scholar Donald Hagner wrote:

True Christianity, the Christianity of the New Testament documents, is absolutely dependent on history. At the heart of the New Testament faith is the assertion that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Cor. 5:19 NASB). The incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as a real event in time and space, i.e., as historical realities, are the indispensable foundations of Christian faith. To my mind, then, Christianity is best defined as the recitation of,

⁴⁵ Allan Millard, “Does the Bible Exaggerate King Solomon’s Wealth?” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, May/June 1989, p. 20.

⁴⁶ Henry Morris, *Many Infallible Proofs* (San Diego; Creation-Life Publishers, 1974), p. 300.

the celebration of, and the participation in God's acts in history, which as the New Testament writings emphasize have found their culmination in Jesus Christ.⁴⁷

Many of the pagan writers of the first century write about or mention Christ and his followers. Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 55-120) was a Roman historian who lived through the reigns of over a half dozen Roman emperors. He has been called the 'greatest historian' of ancient Rome, an individual generally accepted as a moral man with high integrity and goodness. Writing of the reign of Nero, Tacitus alludes to the death of Christ and to the presence of Christians in Rome.

Lucian of Samosata was a Greek satirist during the last half of the second century; he spoke with disdain about the Christians and Christ, never giving any hint that they were unreal.

Suetonius, another Roman historian, court official under Hadrian, and annalist of the imperial House, stated in his *Life of Claudius* 25.4, "As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus [another spelling of Christus], he [Claudius] expelled them from Rome." Luke actually mentions this event in Acts 18:2, which took place in A.D. 49. In addition Suetonius we find Pliny the Younger, who was governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor (A.D. 112), Thallus was one of the first secular writers to mention Christ around A.D. 52.

Phlegon another secular authority wrote a history called *Chronicles*, which mentioned some of the events surrounding the crucifixion, namely the darkening of the sky. Mara Bar-Serapion was a Syrian and probably Stoic philosopher, wrote a letter from prison to his son, encouraging him to pursue wisdom. In his letter, he compares Jesus to the philosophers Socrates and Pythagoras.

Jewish References to Jesus' Historicity

⁴⁷ Donald Hagner, *New Testament Criticism and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991), p. 124.

Scholars have found many reliable references to Jesus, as well as unreliable ones or ones that were once thought to refer to Jesus but do not. Similar to the secular references, the ones found in ancient Jewish sources are unfriendly toward Christianity's founder, followers, and beliefs. For this reason their attestation to events involving Jesus' life are very good evidence to the historicity of these events.

Christian Sources for Jesus' Historicity

Early Christians often paid with their lives or suffered great persecution for their reports that Jesus had lived, died, risen from the dead, and appeared too many after His resurrection. These early Christians had nothing to gain and everything to lose for their testimony that these things had actually happened. This makes their accounts highly significant in the argument for historicity.

It is clear that the pre-New Testament creeds provide the earliest testimony to the church's conviction that Jesus, the sinless God-man, actually lived, died, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven for the salvation of anyone who would confess His as Lord and Savior. The twenty-seven books of the New Testament proclaim, and verify, and often assume the historicity of Jesus Christ. Since these books have long ago been proven reliable, we can see that their records of Jesus give us a clear and irrefutable proof that He really lived and, in fact, still does.⁴⁸

The post-apostolic writers who followed the apostles wrote extensively about the person and work of Jesus. They include, but not limited to, Clement of Rome (last part of the first century), Ignatius, the bishop of Antioch, wrote seven letters in which he makes reference to the Historical Jesus. Quadratus, bishop of the church at Athens, was one of the earliest apologists. Writing to the Roman Emperor Hadrian (A.D. 125), he said, "The deeds of our

⁴⁸ Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, (Thomas Nelson Publisher, Nashville), p.131.

Saviour were always before you, for they were true miracles; those that were healed, those that were raised from the dead, who were seen, not only when healed and when raised, but were always present. They remained living a long time, not only whilst our Lord was on earth, but likewise when he had left the earth. So that some of them have also lived to our own times.”⁴⁹

We also have the writings of Aristides, Justin Martyr, and Hegesippus.

There are additional sources that refer to Christ and Christianity. The following are some additional secular sources: Trajan, Roman emperor, Macrobius, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Jevenal, Seneca, and Hierocles.

To those who would deny the historical existence of Jesus, noted British New Testament scholar I. Howard Marshall writes, “It is not possible to explain the rise of the Christian church or the writing of the Gospels and the stream of tradition that lies behind them without accepting the fact that the Founder of Christianity actually existed.”⁵⁰

The evidence is conclusive. Jesus really lived among us and accomplished powerful works that even hostile, non-Christian sources do not fail to confirm. It is very clear to me that the skeptics about Jesus’ historicity are just wrong, blind or willfully ignorant.

Chapter Two

If Jesus Wasn’t God He Deserves an Oscar

His Direct Claims to Deity

⁴⁹ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History Vol VIII, 2. Loeb. Ed., II.*

⁵⁰ I. Howard Marshall, *I Believe in the Historical Jesus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977).

The writers of Scripture invite us to examine this person called Jesus for ourselves and to conclude for ourselves His significance. Philip Yancey states: “It occurs to me that all the contorted theories about Jesus that have been spontaneously generating since the day of his death merely confirm the awesome risk God took when he stretched himself out on the dissection table—a risk he seemed to welcome. Examine me. Test me. You decide.”⁵¹

Obviously who is Christ, is as important as what He did. “The challenge posed to every succeeding generation by the New Testament witness to Jesus is not so much, ‘What did he teach?’ but ‘Who is he? And what is his relevance for us?’”⁵²

His Trial

Judge Gaynor, the accomplished jurist of the New York bench, in his address upon the trial of Jesus, maintains that blasphemy was the one charge made against Jesus before the Sanhedrin: “It is plain from each of the gospel narratives, that the alleged crime for which Jesus was tried and convicted was blasphemy: . . . Jesus had been claiming supernatural power, which in a human being was blasphemy” (citing John 10:33). Judge Gaynor’s reference is to Jesus’ “making Himself God,” not to what Jesus said concerning the temple.⁵³

Concerning the questions of the Pharisees, A.T. Robertson says, “Jesus accepts the challenge and admits that He claims to be all three (the Messiah, the Son of Man, the Son of God). ‘Ye say’, is just a Greek idiom for ‘Yes’ (compare ‘I Am’ in Mark 14:62 with ‘Thou hast said’ in Matthew 26:64).”⁵⁴

It was to Jesus’ answer that the high priest got upset and tore his clothing. This is clearly no ordinary trial. Irwin Linton, a lawyer, brings this out when he states, “Unique among

⁵¹ Philip Yancey, *The Jesus I Never Knew* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), p. 21.

⁵² Alister McGrath, *Understanding Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), p.16.

⁵³ Charles Deland, *The Mis-Trials of Jesus* (Boston, Mass.: Richard G. Badger, 1914), p.118-119.

⁵⁴ A.T. Robertson, *New Short Grammar of the Greek Testament* (Part I. New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1931), p.277.

criminal trials is this one in which not the actions but the identity of the accused is the issue. Everything about this trial dealt with the identity of Jesus. Even the inscription on the cross was all about His identity.

The one-time skeptic Frank Morison makes clear that “Jesus of Nazareth was condemned to death, not upon the statements of His accusers, but upon an admission extorted from Him under oath.”⁵⁵ What we see is Jesus confessing before His accusers His identity. Jesus was not backing away from His true identity and He clearly understood what He was saying. So, we see that Jesus was crucified for being who He really was, for being the Son of God.

Other Claims of Jesus

Equality with the Father

In John 10:25-33 Jesus claimed to have equality with the Father. The Jews who heard this understood that Jesus was telling them that He was God. They completely understood what He said and what He meant. John 5:17, 18 speak about the Father working and Jesus was working. Because this was on a Sabbath, it infuriated the hearers. By doing this, Jesus was asserting His authority over the Sabbath, which simply added more fuel to the fire.

Continuing His dialogue Jesus then said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58). The only conclusion they could reach with this statement was that Christ had a pre-existent presence, another claim of deity. Jesus also stated that He deserved the same honor given to God. In John 5:23 we read, “*That all should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him....*” The statements of Jesus go on and on as to His deity.

⁵⁵ Frank Morison, *Who Moved the Stone?* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1958), p. 25.

William Biederwolf draws from the evidence a very strong comparison: “A man who can read the New Testament and not see that Christ claims to be more than a man, can look all over the sky at high noon on a cloudless day and not see the sun.”⁵⁶

His Indirect Claims to Deity

First on this list is His forgiveness of sins, clearly, only God can forgive sin. To the Jewish mind, trained in the Law of God, the idea that a man could forgive sins against God is inconceivable. Forgiveness is a prerogative of God alone.

Jesus claimed to be life in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Jesus is not saying He knows about the way, the truth and the life, but that He in fact is in His person these three things.

Titles of Deity

Many English translations of the Bible translate the name of God as “Lord” (all capitals) or “Jehovah.” The word in the original Hebrew is made up of four consonants: YHWH. The more literal translation of YHWH is *Yahweh*.

We are not completely sure of the exact meaning of the name. The Jews actually felt the name was too scared to even pronounce, so they used *Adonai* in their public worship.

Jesus claimed the title of YHWH, which sent the Jews over the edge. They were not even willing to pronounce the name of God and then Jesus claims the title for Himself.

John records for us the words of Jesus concerning His name. We read in John 8:24, “Unless you believe that I AM you shall die in your sins.” In Matthew 13:14, 15, Christ identifies Himself with the “Lord” (*Adonai*) of the Old Testament (Isaiah 6:8-10).

Son of God

⁵⁶Frank Mead, *The Encyclopedia of Religious Quotations* (Westwood, Ill.: Fleming H. Revell, n.d.), p. 50.

The contemporary bible teacher, Charles Ryrie writes concerning the title “Son of God.” He points out that the phrase ‘son of’ can mean ‘offspring of,’ it also carries the meaning, ‘of the order of.’ This points to the fact that in the Old Testament ‘sons of the prophets’ meant of the order of prophets (1 Kings 20:35), and ‘sons of singers’ meant of the order of singers (Neh. 12:28). So then the designation “Son of God” when used of our Lord means of the order of God and is a strong and clear claim to full Deity.⁵⁷

Son of Man

Jesus makes use of the title “Son of Man” in three distinctive ways: concerning His earthly ministry (Matthew 8:20), when foretelling His passion (Matthew 12:40), and in His teaching regarding His coming again (Matthew 13:41).

Stevenson places a special significance to the title “Son of man,” because this was the designation, which our Lord habitually used concerning Himself. No one other than our Lord used this term to refer to Himself. This title is not found in any other reference than His own, with the exception of those who question Him about the title.

Abba-Father

Michael Green, in his book *Runaway World*, writes that Christ asserted that He had a relationship with God, which no one had ever claimed before. It comes out in the Aramaic word *Abba* which He was so fond of using, especially in prayer. Nobody before Him in all the history of Israel had addressed God by this word.⁵⁸

Looking at David, the very one God seemed to have a very special and close relationship, did not speak to God as Father but said that “like as a father...so the Lord” (Psalm 103:13KJV).

The Pharisees understood the implications of it, and charged Him with blasphemy (John

⁵⁷ Charles Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1986), p. 248.

⁵⁸ Michael Green, *Runaway World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1968), p. 99-100.

5:18). The fact is clear, unless Jesus was equal with God His words did amount to blasphemy.

Chapter Three

Significance of Deity: The Trilemma-

Lord, Liar, or Lunatic?

Who is Jesus of Nazareth?

Many have tried to identify Jesus in one way or another. Whatever their conclusion about Jesus one point is clear, Jesus did in fact live, he was a real person and His life drastically changed the world.

The well-known historian Jaroslav Pelikan makes this statement: “Regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries. If it were possible, with some sort of super magnet, to pull up out of that history every scrap of metal bearing at least a trace of his name, how much would be left? It is from his birth that most of the human race dates its calendars, it is by his name that millions curse and in his name that millions pray.”⁵⁹

With the countless contributions that have been made in the name of Jesus it is appropriate to say that Jesus of Nazareth is the most dominant and outstanding person who has ever walked on this earth. It is His followers who have taken the great sacrificing steps to lift others out of the pit called life. Jesus of Nazareth has been transforming lives for almost two millennia, and in the process He has been rewriting the progress and outcome of human history. When looking at the basic facts about Jesus’ life, the vast impact He has had is nothing short of incredible.

Jesus thought it was fundamentally important what others believed about Him. It was not a subject that allowed for neutrality or a less than honest appraisal of the evidence. C.S. Lewis summed it up when he wrote; “I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: ‘I’m ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don’t accept His claim to be God.’ We must not say that one thing. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He

⁵⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 1.

would either be a lunatic-on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg-or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a mad man or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. However, let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.”⁶⁰

Chapter Four

Support of Deity:

Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus

⁶⁰ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p. 40,41.

The early church approached the deity of Jesus in two specific ways. First, they appealed to the resurrection as absolute proof of Jesus' deity. Second, they referred to the Old Testament prophecies, which Jesus fulfilled in His earthly ministry. The Old Testament, written over a one-thousand year period, contains nearly three hundred references to the coming Messiah. All of these were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, which gives a very solid argument for the deity of Jesus.

Jesus declared, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill" (Matt.5:17). Jesus made a point of showing his disciples how the Old Testament related to him, "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:27).

We can see the significance of predictive prophecy. The prophecy of the Old and New Testaments proves that there is an intellect behind the writing of these documents. This should clearly prove that there is a God and authenticates the deity of Jesus. All of this should bring anyone who has an honest look at these things to conclude the inspiration of the Bible.

Floyd Hamilton, in *The Basis of Christian Faith* (a modern defense of the Christian religion), writes: "Canon Liddon is authority for the statement that there are in the Old Testament 332 distinct predictions which were literally fulfilled in Christ."⁶¹

The evidence is over whelming, however, the predictions surrounding our Lord's passion is of particular importance. The predictions of Jesus being rejected by Jews and Gentiles: Psalms 2:1; Isaiah 6:9; 53:1; 65:2, His persecution: Psalms 22:6; 35:7, 12; 56:5;71:10; 109:2: His Triumphal entry into Jerusalem: Psalms 8:2; 118:25; Zechariah 9:9, His betrayal by one

⁶¹ Floyd Hamilton, *The Basis of Christian Faith* (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1927), p.160.

of His own: Psalms 41:9; 55:13; Zechariah 13:6, His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver: Zechariah 11:12. Consider that along with these predictions we have the betrayer's death, the purchase of the potter's field, desertion by His disciples, false accusations, the silence under accusation, the mocking, patience under suffering, crucifixion, offer of gall and vinegar, prayer for His enemies, cries upon the cross, death in prime of life, death among criminals, the response of nature, casting lots for His garments, bones not broken, the piercing spear, voluntary death, vicarious suffering and the burial with the rich, taken together provide more than ample evidence for the deity of Jesus.

Chapter Five

Support of Deity:

The Resurrection-Hoax or History?

Josh McDowell wrote, “After more than seven hundred hours of studying this subject and thoroughly investigating its foundation, I have come to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the *most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon the minds of men*, OR it is the most fantastic fact of history.”⁶²

Jesus has three basic credentials: (1) The impact of His life, through His miracles and teachings, upon history; (2) Fulfilled prophecy in His life; and (3) His resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ and Christianity stand or fall together.

Dr. Norman Geisler puts it this way, “If Christ did not rise in the same physical body that was placed in the tomb, then the resurrection loses its value as an evidential proof of His claim to be God (John 8:58; 10:30). The resurrection cannot verify Jesus’ claim to be God unless He was resurrected in the body in which He was crucified. That body was a literal, physical body. Unless Jesus rose in a material body, there is no way to verify His resurrection. It loses its historically persuasive value.”⁶³

The Significance of the Resurrection

All but four of the major world religions are based on mere philosophical propositions. Of the four that are based on personalities rather than on a philosophical system, only Christianity claims an empty tomb for its founder.

William Milligan states: “While speaking of the positive evidence of the Resurrection of our Lord, it may be further urged that the fact, if true, harmonizes all the other facts of His history.”⁶⁴ The resurrection of Christ has always been the heart and soul of the church. Jesus not only predicted His resurrection but also stated that this one event would be the “sign” to authenticate His claims to be the Messiah (Matt. 12; John 2).

⁶² Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence The Demands a Verdict*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville), p. 203.

⁶³ Norman Geisler, *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), p. 36.

⁶⁴ William Milligan, *the Resurrection of Our Lord* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1927), p. 71.

As a historical fact, it has been His resurrection that has enabled men to believe in His official exaltation over humanity. It is not a simple issue of moral influence by His life, example and teaching. It is the belief in His resurrection that has enabled men to be bold and unwavering in their faith.

Looking at the burial of our Lord and the tomb, which He was laid in, gives more support to the New Testament narrative. No one can affirm the historicity of the burial story and plausibly deny the historicity of the empty tomb.

Consider the guards at the tomb. Professor Roper writes: “Commanding the guard was a centurion designated by Pilate, presumably one in which he had full confidence, whose name according to tradition was Petronius. It is, therefore, reasonable to assume that these representatives of the Emperor could have been trusted to perform their duty to guard a tomb quite as strictly and as faithfully as they had executed a crucifixion. They had not the slightest interest in the task to which they were assigned. Their sole purpose and obligation was rigidly to perform their duty as soldiers of the empire of Rome to which they had dedicated their allegiance. The Roman seal affixed to the stone before Joseph’s tomb was far more sacred to them than all the philosophy of Israel or the sanctity of her ancient creed. Soldiers cold-blooded enough to gamble over a dying victim’s cloak are not the kind of men to be hoodwinked by timid Galileans or to jeopardize their Roman necks by sleeping on their post.”⁶⁵

E. LeCamus says in reference to the tight security measures taken at Jesus’ sepulcher, “Never had a criminal been given so much worry after his execution. Above all never had a crucified man had the honour of being guarded by a squad of soldiers.”

The Post-Resurrection Scene

⁶⁵Albert Roper, *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965), p. 33.

If ever a fact of ancient history may count as indisputable, it should be the empty tomb. From Easter Sunday on there must have been a tomb, clearly known as the tomb of Jesus that did not contain His body. Christian teaching from the very beginning promoted a living, resurrected Savior. The Jewish authorities strongly opposed this teaching and were prepared to go to any lengths in order to suppress it. Imagine this, all they had to do was bring potential converts to the tomb and show them Jesus' body. The church would have died on the spot, but the fact remains that the tomb was empty and they could not produce a body. W. J. Sparrow-Simpson points out that the empty tomb by itself did not cause the disciples to believe. Of John, it is said: "he saw and believed" (John 20:8). This, however, was probably because he remembered that Christ had foretold His resurrection. Neither Mary Magdalene, nor the women, nor even Peter were brought to believe by the testimony of the empty tomb.⁶⁶ It was Christ's post-resurrection appearances that assured His followers that He had actually raised from the dead. The statement that John believed could also be interpreted to mean he simply believed the report that the tomb was empty, since he had now seen for himself. We do not find John trying to convince the other disciples in the Upper Room that Jesus is alive; he was apparently just as confused and afraid as the rest of them.

C.S. Lewis, in speaking of the importance of Christ's post-resurrection appearance, writes: "The first fact in the history of Christendom is a number of people who say they have seen the Resurrection. If they had died without making anyone else believe this 'gospel' no gospels would ever have been written."⁶⁷

It is interesting to note that substantially unhistorical accounts of Jesus did not rise until the second century, and even then, they were universally rejected by the church. The actual

W. J. Sparrow-Simpson, *The Resurrection and the Christian Faith* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1968), p.151-⁶⁶.52

⁶⁷ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1952), p. 149.

enemies of Christ offered no refutation of the resurrection they were simply silent. In Acts 2, Luke records Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost. There was no refutation given by the Jews to his bold proclamation of Christ's resurrection. The silence of the Jews speaks louder than the voice of the Christians, or, as Fairbairn notes: "The Silence of the Jews is as significant as the speech of the Christians."⁶⁸

The empty tomb, the silent testimony to the resurrection of Christ, has never been refuted. The Romans and Jews could not produce Christ's body or explain where it went. Still they refused to believe. People still reject the resurrection, not because of the insufficiency of evidence but in spite of the evidence.

John R. W. Stott says, "Perhaps the transformation of the disciples of Jesus is the greatest evidence of all for the resurrection."⁶⁹

Paul Little asks: "Are these men, who helped transform the moral structure of society, consummate liars or deluded madmen? These alternatives are harder to believe than the fact of the Resurrection, and there is no shred of evidence to support them."⁷⁰

Chapter Six

:Support of Deity

The Great Proposition

The idea that God would become man has been debated and pondered for two thousand years. Why would God do such thing? The answer lies in God's desire to communicate with His creation. The best way for God to communicate to us is to become one of us.

⁶⁸A.M. Fairbairn, *Studies in the Life of Christ* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1896), p. 357.

⁶⁹ John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (2nd ed. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1971), p. 58-59.

⁷⁰ Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe* (Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1987), p. 63.

Throughout human history, God has used numerous means of communication to reach the world with His message. Finally, he sent His Son into the world.

Not only did God want to communicate with us, He wanted to demonstrate to us just how much He loves us.

If God were to come to us in human form, it would make sense that He would do so in such a way as to not be confused or mistaken as someone else. That was exactly the plan God put into place when He sent His Son. Mohammed, Confucius, Buddha, and all other human beings were conceived by natural means. Jesus was totally different and unique in His arrival. First, we have the prediction of his coming and unique birth years before it happen. No other religious leader was predicted prior to his birth, let alone come by means of a virgin birth.

If in fact God were to become a man, then we could properly expect him to have a unique arrival in history. He should be without sin, able to show supernatural abilities, speak like no other person, meet the deep personal needs of humanity and overcome our feared enemy, death. It is only in the life of Jesus can we find all of these signs of deity.

Through out the Old Testament we find references to the coming of Jesus, starting with Genesis through Exodus, Proverbs, Psalms and Isaiah. The coming of the Messiah was clear and the whole nation of Israel looked for Him. The one outstanding feature of the Messiah must be the virgin birth. The early church was convinced of it, taught it and died for it.

Getting away from the church we find that even in the Koran Jesus is referred to regularly as Isaibn Maryam, that is, Jesus, the son of Mary. Stauffer writes, “Abdullahal-Baidawi, the classical commentator on the Koran, remarks with full understanding of the Semitic practice in nomenclature: The name of the mother is borne when the father is unknown. But this

name and explanation are here intended in a thoroughly positive sense. In Islam Jesus is regarded as the Son of the Virgin Mary who was begotten by the creative Word of God.”⁷¹

If God became a man, then we would expect Him to be without sin.

Jesus at one point turned to the crowd around Him and asked them, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46). There was no answer because no one was able to find any real fault with Him. Jesus could only do this publicly because He was sinless. Christ’s public statement concerning His holiness is amazing at the very least; no man would say He was sinless with any sense of sincerity. Yet, Jesus was sincere and showed no sense of being uncomfortable with His statements.

C.E. Jefferson says, “There is nothing in Jesus’ consciousness which indicates that He was guilty of any sin.”⁷² Jesus’ personality betrayed his thoughts and beliefs. As John Stott states, “It is clear then that Jesus believed Himself to be sinless, as He believed Himself to be the Messiah and the Son of God.”⁷³

The thief on the cross next to Jesus declared Him to be innocent. Pilate also declared Jesus to be innocent of any wrong doing and said the charges against Him were basically false. The Roman guard standing near the cross stated, “Certainly this man was innocent” (Luke 23:47). The last two thousand years have given testimony to the sinless life of Jesus; people have committed their lives in service and devotion and continue to do so. What we see is a perfect life lived in the midst of a sinful world.

If God became a man, then we would expect some miracles

What did Jesus do? He simply healed the sick, caused the blind to see, the lame to walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf to hear and the dead raised to life (Luke 7:22). Jesus demonstrated

⁷¹ Hugh Schonfield, *According to the Hebrews* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., 1937), p. 17-18.

⁷² C.E. Jefferson, *The Character of Jesus* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1908), p. 328.

⁷³ John Stott, *Basic Christianity* (2nd ed. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1971), p. 39.

that he had power over nature, over sickness, over evil, over demons and over death. Paul Little states, “Christ demonstrated a power over natural forces that could belong only to God, the author of these forces.”⁷⁴

If God became man, then certainly He would speak the greatest words ever spoken

It was normal for the people who listened to Jesus to be astonished at His teaching (Luke 4:32). Jesus said about his own words, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Luke 21:33).

Statistically speaking, the Gospels are the greatest literature ever written. They are read by more people, quoted by more authors, translated into more tongues, represented in more art, set to more music, than any other book or books written by any man in any century in any land.⁷⁵ The influence of Jesus on mankind is today as strong as it was when He dwelt among men. The ministry of Jesus lasted only three years and yet in those three years is condensed the deepest meaning of the history of religion. No great life ever passed so swiftly, so quietly, so humbly, so far removed from the noise and commotion of the world; and no great life after its close excited such universal and lasting interest.⁷⁶

If God Became a Man, Then we Would Expect Him to Satisfy the Spiritual Hunger in Humanity

The major religions all speak to humanity’s need. The pyramids of Mexico and the shrines of India are examples of mankind’s search for a spiritual answer to life. Mark Twain said this about human emptiness: “From his cradle to his grave a man never does a single thing which has any first and foremost objective save one-to secure peace of mind-spiritual comfort for himself.”⁷⁷ Bernard Ramm states that the “Christian experience alone provides

⁷⁴ Paul Little, *Know What You Believe* (Wheaton: Scripture Press, 1987), p.56.

⁷⁵ Josh Mc Dowell, *the New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville), P. 320.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.321.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 325.

man with an experience commensurate with his nature as free spirit...Anything less than God leaves the spirit of man thirsty, hungry, restless, frustrated, and incomplete.”⁷⁸

If God Became a Man, then We Would Expect Him to Overcome Death

Jesus was not forced to give up His life (Matthew 26:53), He voluntarily laid it down. His death was not a suicide, but a voluntary willingness to allow His enemies to complete their actions. A simple word from Jesus and a multitude of angels would have been there to care for and destroy the enemy. Imagine how hard it must have been for the holy angels to stand there and watch the Savior being treated in such a way. Still, it was Jesus who gave up the spirit; they did not take it from Him. As terrible as the execution of Jesus was the resurrection was even more glorious.

Jesus not only predicted His own death, but also His resurrection from the grave. He said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19). Morris writes, “He alone, of all men who ever lived, conquered death itself. By all rules of evidence, His bodily resurrection from the grave can be adjudged the best-proved fact of all history. ‘I am the resurrection and the life,’ He said. ‘Because I live, you shall live also’” (John 11:25; 14:19).⁷⁹

Part 3

Chapter One

THE CASE FOR AND AGAINST CHRISTIANITY

Is The Bible From God?

In many places, the bible claims to be the “Word of God.” Paul wrote, “All Scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 325.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.327.

Tim 3:16). In plain words, the bible is “inspired” by God. To be more accurate, the bible is from the breath of God. The bible was not inspired the same way in which a singer or artist may be inspired. God has breathed the bible. The bible claims to be His very Word; it has come from His very mouth.⁸⁰

Chapter Two

The Presupposition of Anti-supernaturalism

Old Testament Claims to Inspiration

We find many references in the Old Testament to the fact that God produced the Scriptures. There has never really been any doubt that the Old Testament was from God. The books of Exodus (32:160, Leviticus (1:1), Numbers (1:1), and Deuteronomy (31:24-26) all make explicit claim to inspiration. Genesis alone makes no such direct claim.

While Daniel was in exile he recognized Moses’ Law as God’s Word, saying, “The curse and the oath written in the Law of Moses the servant of God have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against Him. And He has confirmed His words which He spoke against us” (Daniel 9:11).

The first five books of the Old Testament are not alone on this subject. The second division of the Old Testament, “The Prophets,” also supports the inspiration of Scripture. These later writers had a very high regard for the earlier writers, they considered them the Word of God, given by the Spirit of God for the good of Israel. The prophets were the voice of God not

⁸⁰ Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville), p.334.

only in what they said but also in what they wrote. The vast majority of the books of the Old Testament claim to be God's words to men.

The New Testament Claim to Inspiration

The New Testament also claims to be the "Word of God." From the very first writings of the New Testament, the people recognized the inspiration. Christ is the key to the inspiration and canonization of the Scriptures. Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit would direct the apostles into "all truth," which resulted in the writing of the New Testament.

The authority of apostolic teaching is accepted as equal with the prophets and fundamental to the church.

Peter refers to Paul's writings as "Scripture" (2 Peter 3:16), and 1 Timothy 5:18 draws from both Luke 10:7 and Deuteronomy 25:4 in the application of the phrase "for the Scripture says."

The Bible claims to be inspired by God. If this is true, the Bible should be free from error. God's character is at stake on this issue of inspired. If there were errors, it would reflect badly on the trustworthiness of God and His ability to do what He says He will do. Since God is a God of truth, there cannot be any false statements or errors in His book. The author of Hebrews stated, "It is impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:18).

Inerrancy is defined in terms of truth, and truth is a property of words organized in sentences. Therefore, a modern grammatical error does not preclude an inerrant Bible.⁸¹ Styles vary according to authors and subject matter. The New Testament shows a wide variety of styles and modes of expression. This does not constitute error, different writers wrote as God directed them using their own style and personality.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 340

Even though the bible uses nonscientific language, inspiration remains intact. The bible was written for the common people of every generation, and it therefore uses common, everyday language. Remember, the scriptures were written in ancient times using ancient standards. For instance, it is no more unscientific to speak of the sun standing still (Josh. 10:12) than it is to refer to the sun rising (Josh. 1:16). For the scriptures to be meaningful, it had to come in the language of the prophets and apostles and employ the cultural background of each. The key is truth, is the passage truthful or not?

When we look at the four Gospels, we can see that God gave us the ability to see the essence of the events, thus the accurate meaning of what happened. The slight variation in Jesus' words actually helps us capture the accurate meaning He intended.

Are there are errors in the Bible.

Some claim the Bible contains errors. One particular problem comes from people who simply do not like what the Bible says. The passage in Leviticus 18:25 where Joshua is told to kill all the Canaanites is disturbing to many. Davis offers this passage as an example of error; certainly, God would not kill innocent people. However, the Canaanites were not innocent before God.⁸²

Some alleged errors turn out to be discrepancies caused by copyists who made handwritten copies of Bible manuscripts. Other discrepancies are divergent but not contradictory accounts. The fact is more of the Bible stands confirmed today than at any time in history. The fact that the original writings are not available does not destroy the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures. But, some would argue that since only the original manuscripts were inspired by God, and since there are no original manuscripts around today, there is no

⁸² Stephen Davis, *The Debate About the Bible: Inerrancy Versus Infallibility* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), p. 139.

way to prove an error in them. However, we do have very accurate copies that are perfectly adequate for Christian teaching and life. There is no major (or even minor) biblical doctrine that is undermined by any copyist's mistakes.

Another objection to inerrancy is the claim that inspiration covers only the doctrinal or moral areas of Scripture, but not necessarily the historical and the scientific areas. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine" (2 Timothy 3:16). The Bible makes no claim to limited inspiration; everything stated in Scripture is true. In theory one may separate the spiritual from the historical, but in practice that will not work. How can we possibly separate the spiritual and the historical concerning the Cross or the Resurrection? Basically there are two qualifications to inerrancy: first, only the original manuscripts are inerrant, not the copies; second, only what the Bible affirms is inerrant, not everything it contains.⁸³

"You can trust your Bible, for it is the inspired word of God. The pollution which intruded in the transmission and translation of the bible is minor, under control, and diminishing.

Therefore, your Bible is trustworthy."⁸⁴

Miracles in a Christian Framework

Many have presuppositions concerning Christianity and one of them is the impossibility of miracles. Peter Kreeft observes that the role of miracles in Christianity is unique among the world's religions:

The clinching argument for the importance of miracles is that God thought they were important enough to use them to found and perpetuate his church.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 349.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 349.

In fact, all the essential and distinctive elements of Christianity are miracles: creation, revelation (first to the Jews), the giving of the law, prophecies, the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the Ascension and the Second Coming and Last Judgment.

Subtract miracles from Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism, or Taoism, and you have essentially the same religion left. Subtract miracles from Christianity, and you have nothing but the clichés and platitudes most American Christians get weekly (and weakly) from their pulpits. Nothing distinctive, no reason to be a Christian rather than something else.⁸⁵

If God exists, miracles are not merely logically possible, but really and genuinely possible at every moment. The only thing that is needed is for God to decide to perform one.

Chapter Three

ARCHAEOLOGY AND BIBLICAL CRITICISM

Archaeological discoveries have contributed to the analysis of the manuscripts, the understanding of technical words, and the development of more dependable lexicons. A.T. Olmstead, in “History, Ancient World, and the Bible,” speaks about the unfolding of the documentary hypothesis: “While Old Testament Higher Critics spun out their increasingly minute dissections, and more and more took an agnostic attitude toward the recorded facts,⁸⁶ this attitude was sharply challenged by exciting discoveries in the Near East. Archaeology enhances our knowledge of the economic, cultural, and social, and political background of biblical passages. It also contributes to the understanding of other religions that bordered Israel. Clearly archaeology does not prove the Bible; it confirms its historicity and explains various passages. And archaeology has not totally refuted the radical critics, but has challenged many of their presuppositions.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 358.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.370.

We are discovering over and over that archaeology supports the Old Testament accounts .which have been rejected by critics as unhistorical or contradictory to known facts

The archaeological discoveries continue to confirm the historical accuracy or the literary antiquity of detail after detail in the Old Testament. No evidence has come to the surface that would destroy or refute any item in the traditional record. The Biblical record of Law and .Prophets has been vindicated by the many discoveries made in the last 100 years

Consequences of radical higher criticism

The Old Testament is seen as totally unhistorical by the higher critics. According to the higher critics, Israel's history is totally natural, not supernatural in origin and development.

Their conclusion states that Israel's history, as recorded in the Old Testament is basically fraudulent. If this conclusion is to be accepted one must then accept the results that follow.

First, we have to admit the historical record as found in the Scriptures is not true. While isolated events may be considered correct, when viewed as a whole it gives a false view of the chronological history of Israel.⁸⁷ Over and over the critics construct theories that

contradict the text on major points. This is done without any methodological basis for the conclusions. All this does is confuse and dilute actual meaning of the text, leaving the student

of the word with a difficult choice. Either the student has to accept the higher critics

conclusions and reject the Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God or reject the critic's .conclusions altogether and trust the Scriptures

Chapter Four

EVIDENCE FOR MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 450.

The internal evidence clearly states that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. “And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel...Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, ‘All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient’” (Ex. 24:4, 7). “Then the Lord said to Moses: ‘Write these words, for according to the tenor of these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel’” (Ex. 34:27). Passages like these make it very difficult to discount .Moses as the author

Moses was certainly in a position to write the Pentateuch. He grew up in Pharaoh’s house and was, as Stephen said, “Learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22). Moses had the time to write this history. He spent forty years in Egypt, and forty years in the desert. When we consider that Moses had the education to write, tradition credits him with the authorship, he had the geographical familiarity with the land; he possessed the motivation .and the time to write the Pentateuch, it is hard to deny his authorship

Other Old Testament books credit Moses with the Pentateuch. Joshua 8:32 speaks of “the Law of Moses, which he had written.” We find other references in Joshua 1:7, 1 Kings 2:3; 2 .Kings 14:6; 1 Chronicles 22:13; 2 Chronicles 5:10 as well as others

The New Testament writers also believed that Moses wrote the Pentateuch. The apostles believed that “Moses wrote for us a law” (Mark 12:19). Paul declared Moses as the author of .(the Pentateuch (Rom. 10:5). Even our Lord mentioned Moses as the author (Mark 7:10

Chapter Five

The Repetition of Accounts

There are some stories in the Pentateuch that are repeated twice. And still others are said to have contradictory accounts like creation and the flood. Since no author would have a reason to repeat the same story, the repetition indicates more than one author. It would be very unlikely for the same author to give contradictory accounts of the same event, which would .logically point to a second author

What we see are different stories with similar details. Some are simply the same event from a different viewpoint. Sometimes the repetition is a characteristic of Hebrew style, which often ⁸⁸.makes a general statement by way of introduction and then fills in the details

INCONGRUITIES

The Pentateuch was supposed to have been written by Moses, yet many of the passages are written in the third person. If the Pentateuch was written by Moses, how could it contain the account of his death? These are just a few of the questions the higher critics present as .evidence that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch

There are two possible alternatives to the critics' third-person argument. And the account of Moses' death does not necessarily need to be attributed to Moses. Perhaps Moses dictated his work to scribes. This would account for the third person sections of the Mosaic enactments that were dictated. It is very possible that sections of the text were given to priests for safe keeping, and only at a later period were the manuscript pieces assembled into some sort of mosaic and joined together into a roll.⁸⁹ This would be very consistent with ancient practices. The account of Moses' death was simply a later addition to what he had already written. The Talmud attributes this section relating to Moses' death to Joshua. It is not inconceivable that

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 495

⁸⁹ R.K. Harrison. *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1969), p.538.

God in revealing the contents of the law also told Moses how he was going to finish his course

The critics seem to be arguing in a circle having drawn their conclusions based upon their presuppositions. As a result their conclusions are a reflection of what they want them to be.

Herman Wouk, the Jewish author and playwright, while not a professional biblical scholar gives an interesting suggestion as to why there remains a general basic acceptance of the theories rejecting the Mosaic authorship. In his book, *This Is My God*, Wouck offers this evaluation: “It is a hard thing for men who have given their lives to a theory, and taught it to⁹⁰ younger men, to see it fall apart

Historical Skepticism

The critics claim that the New Testament does not give a historical record of Jesus. Many of the critics do not view the New Testament as a primary source of information concerning Jesus. Julius Wellhausen and J. Martin agree with R. H. Lightfoot, another well known critic, that the evidence is limited concerning Jesus. This position is the result of failing to accept the writings of the New Testament as authoritative and inspired

Albert Schweitzer writing about the historical Jesus said, “The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and⁹¹ clothed by modern theology in an historical garb

It is hard to believe that these critics are so blind to the evidence that does exist, even outside of the New Testament. Thankfully there are those who come to the defense of the New

⁹⁰ Herman Wouk, *This is My God* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1959), p.318.

⁹¹ Albert Schweitzer, *The Psychiatric Study of Jesus* (The Beacon Press, 1948).

Testament record. F.F. Bruce comments on the historical accuracy of Luke: “A man whose accuracy can be demonstrated in matters where we are able to test it is likely to be accurate⁹²” even where the means for testing him are not available

In reference to the special character of Jesus as the foundation of the authenticity of the New Testament, E.F. Scott makes an observation about the attack of the critics: “Their evidence would hardly be challenged if they were concerned with some other hero of antiquity, and it⁹³” is only because they recount the life of Jesus that they are viewed suspiciously

The claims by the New Testament writers about the character of the historical Jesus are not seen to be a problem by Montgomery

However, the inability to distinguish Jesus’ claims for himself from the New Testament writers’ claims for him should cause no dismay, since (1) the situation exactly parallels that for all historical personages who have not themselves chosen to write (e.g. Alexander the Great, Augustus Caesar, Charlemagne). We would hardly claim that in these cases we can achieve no adequate historical portraits. Also, (2) the New Testament writers record eyewitness testimony concerning Jesus and can⁹⁴ therefore be trusted to convey an accurate historical picture of him

The Christians,” concludes Pierre Benoit, “may not have been interested in ‘history’; but“ they were certainly interested in the ‘historical.’ The preachers of the new faith may not have wanted to narrate everything about Jesus, but they certainly did not want to relate⁹⁵” anything that was not real

Norman Pittenger declares: “Let us take it for granted that all attempts to deny the historicity of Jesus have failed.”⁹⁶ Form criticism assumes the New Testament portrays what the church

⁹²F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents; Are they Reliable?* (Downers Grove; Ill., InterVarsity Press, 1964), p. 90.

⁹³ Ernest Scott, *The Validity of the Gospel Record* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1938), p. 1

⁹⁴ John Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (Downers Grove, Ill., InterVarsity press, 1964), p.48.

⁹⁵ Pierre Benoit, *Jesus and the Gospels* (Vol. I. Trans. By Weatherhead. New York: herder and Herder, 1973), p. 32.

⁹⁶ Norman Pittenger, *The Problem of the Historical Jesus* (Angelical Theological Review. Vol.36. April 1954), p. 89-90.

believed to be true of Jesus, rather than what was true. Luke proved himself to be habitually accurate. No other historical figure is attacked as Jesus is. It is very clear that the critic's views are not impartial, but terribly slanted in the wrong direction

Chapter Six

Jesus Under Fire

In recent years there has been an increased effort to discover the historical Jesus. The liberal critics have attempted to remake Jesus in their own image. This quest has been going on for the past two hundred years, beginning with Reimarius (1774-78). The quest for the historical Jesus has continued throughout the past two centuries, taking on many different shapes and forms. The big problem with any attempt to find the historical Jesus involves the understanding of the term "historical." Among liberals this means the historical-critical method is in place. This method assumes that there cannot be any miracles, no outside intervention by God. This approach will naturally cause a problem when trying to understand a supernatural being such as Jesus. By their definition Jesus cannot be supernatural and cannot do miracles. So they must find some other explanation for the events surrounding the birth, life and death of Jesus. Ignoring the evidence they reach conclusions that fit into their view of the world

The Jesus seminar was the latest attempt to destroy the faith of many. Their conclusions reject any possibility of the supernatural and they reach their conclusions by majority vote. I do not believe that truth is determined by a vote of any kind and most of their proofs are not compelling. Very often we see conclusions with no evidence to support their claims. They

offer only another example of unsubstantiated negative biblical criticism. Their conclusions are contrary to the overwhelming evidence for the historicity of the New Testament and the reliability of the New Testament witnesses. They are simply based on an unsubstantiated .anti-supernatural bias

The conclusion of millions of people down through history, whether peasants or scholars, has been that Jesus live, died, and lives again to change the lives of those who will accept Him as He really is. The great need of the world today is to see Jesus for who he really is, the Savior of the world and to place their trust in His finished work on Calvary

This study has been very encouraging to me personally. While I personally believed in the inerrancy of scripture and the biblical accounts, this study has put teeth to my convictions. The evidence is overwhelming and compelling, any rejection of the evidence is simply the result of a hardened heart that is clearly blind to the light that God has so graciously .provided

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