

## Is The Bible The Word Of God?

(Part 1)

I. In an open investigation of the Bible, we must first ask, “What does the Bible claim about itself?” If the Bible makes no claim that it is the word of God, no investigation is needed. If it does make such a claim, we are compelled to investigate those claims.

II. What then does the Bible say about itself?

1. “After these things ***the word of the LORD came*** to Abram in a vision, saying, *Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you; Your reward shall be very great.*” Gen 15:1

*Then behold, ***the word of the LORD came*** to him, saying, “This man will not be your heir; but one who shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir.”* Gen 15:4

**(“the word of the Lord” is used 239x’s in the OT and 15 x’s in the NT)**

2. “Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ***Thus says the LORD,*** “Israel is My son, My first-born.” Exod. 4:22

**(The phrase “thus says the Lord” is used 416 x’s in the OT)**

3. ***Now the LORD spoke*** to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they had approached the presence of the LORD and died.” Lev. 16:1

**(The phrase “the Lord spoke” is used 132 x’s in the OT)**

4. It is estimated that phrases like these are used over 3000 times in the Bible.

5. Two other passages we might consider are found in **2Tim. 3:16,17** and **2Peter 1:20,21**.

III. The claim has been made, and we must determine whether this claim is true or not.

IV. To simply ignore these claims based upon preconceived prejudices is to judge without due consideration. It shows the inquirer to be dishonest in his inquiry. If we are seriously seeking to know whether the Bible is the word of God, the claims made must be investigated thoroughly.

1. Either the word of God did come to Abram or it didn’t.
2. Either The Lord did say these things or He didn’t.
3. Either the Lord spoke or He didn’t.
4. All scripture is either inspired of God or it isn’t.
5. Either men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God or they didn’t.

V. The question arises, how does one investigate the claims the Bible makes of having come from God? The statements themselves simply state what is assumed to be fact. Yet any individual could make similar claims and those claims be false.

VI. As we will see in this study, there are many proofs testifying to the veracity of the Bible. These proofs in conjunction with the claim that Bible is the word of God provides a solid foundation for accepting the Bible as the word of God.

VII. These proofs are...

1. Fulfilled prophecy
2. The scientific facts found in the Bible.
3. The unity and uniqueness of the Bible text.
4. The historical accuracy of the Bible text.
5. The existence of Jesus.
6. The testimony of the resurrection of Christ.

VIII. These are the areas we will be covering as we seek to satisfy our own minds in answering the question, "Is the Bible the word of God?"

**Trans:** As we begin we must first address a serious flaw found in the case of those who say the Bible is a fraud. This will also be the criteria by which we judge every proof offered.

## 1. Answering the claim of fraud

A. There are those who claim the Bible to be a fraud, in as much as it claims to be the word of God.

1. If one make's such a claim it is reasonable to suppose they have proof.
2. If they have no proof, why make such a claim?

B. Now, in our courts we have a law stating one is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

1. As long as the defendant claims innocence, he is presumed to be innocent.
2. Even if the individual is truly guilty, as long as he holds to his claim of innocence, and until proof contrary to his claim is provided, he is presumed innocent.

C. It is not the responsibility of the defender to prove innocence before the case for guilt has been presented. There is no need to prove innocence when innocence is already presumed.

D. Once the case of guilt has been given, the defender can answer the claims made.

E. The Bible has made the claim that it is the word of God. It is considered innocent of fraud until one proves this claim to be false.

F. Thus, the burden of proof falls to those who claim fraud.

G. When someone makes the claim that the Bible is not the word of God, **they** must be pressed to provide proof. We should not rush headlong to prove the Bible's innocence before the accuser proves it's guilt.

H. In this study we will assume that the accusers have given their arguments for each point we cover and then we will answer their accusations.

## **2. If the Bible is a fraud the writers were completely incompetent at hiding it.**

A. The Bible is a book which seeks open investigation, begs to be examined, and hides nothing,.

1. **Isa. 1:18**
2. **John 5:39**
3. **1Thess. 5:21**
4. **Acts 17:11**

B. If the writers of the Bible knew they were lying in their claims of inspiration why would they ask for open investigation? Remember these books were being read by the people of their time.

C. As we will come to see, the true author of the Bible knows that there is nothing to hide. The author of the Bible knows that what is found therein is in fact truth,

1. **John 17:17**
2. **Heb. 6:17,18**
3. **Titus 1:2**

D. There is no worry of fraud. No worry of the book being found false. It's claims are true because its source is true.

## **3. Considering the proofs**

### **A. Fulfilled prophecy**

1. The Bible is a book that stands or falls on its own statements. The Bible writers have made certain specific claims and if these claims are not found to be true then the book can be considered to be at best an error filled book and at worst a complete fraud. This is especially true in the realm of prophecy, **Deut 18:22**

2. Does the Bible offer fulfilled prophecy as proof of inspiration?
3. The argument presented by the skeptics is that Bible prophecies are not prophecies at all, being written after the fact.
4. They make this claim because they know that what the Bible prophesied and what actually happened are exactly the same. Not wanting to believe in prophecy they hold to the “after the fact” claim. But, In making this claim the skeptics inadvertently prove the accuracy of the prophecies.
5. One of the most impressive internal proofs of the Bible's inspiration is its prophetic utterances. Rex A. Turner Sr. has suggested:
6. Predictive prophecy is the highest evidence of divine revelation. The one thing that mortal man cannot do is to know and report future events in the absence of a train of circumstances that naturally suggest certain possibilities... (1989, p. 12).
7. If the Bible is inspired of God, it should contain valid, predictive prophecy. In fact, the Bible's prophecy completely foretold to the minutest detail, and painstakingly fulfilled with the greatest precision has confounded its critics for generations. The Bible contains prophecies about individuals, lands, nations, and even the predicted Messiah.
8. Thomas H. Horne defined predictive prophecy as "a miracle of knowledge, a declaration or representation of something future, beyond the power of human sagacity to discern or to calculate"(1970, 1:272). The Bible confirms that definition: **Deuteronomy 18:20-22**.
9. The prophet Isaiah based the credibility of his message on prophecy. To the promoters of idolatry in his day, he issued the following challenge: "Let them bring forth, and declare unto us what shall happen: declare ye the former things, what they are, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or show us things to come"(Isaiah 41:22). His point was this: It is one thing to make the prediction; it is entirely another to see that prediction actually come true and be corroborated by subsequent history.
10. Since the Bible claims to be the word of God and claims to be prophetic, by its own admission, it must be accurate or held up as a fraud, Deut 18:22

11. In regards to the claim of prophecy, in order for a prophecy to be valid, it must meet certain criteria.

- a. It must be a specific, detailed declaration, as opposed to being nebulous, vague, or general in nature.

**Arthur Pierson wrote:** "The particulars of the prophecy should be so many and minute that there shall be no possibility of accounting by shrewd guess-work for the accuracy of the fulfillment" (1913, pp. 75-76).

**Bernard Ramm has suggested:** "The prophecy must be more than a good guess or a conjecture. It must possess sufficient precision as to be capable of verification by means of the fulfillment" (1971, p. 82).

- b. There must be a sufficient amount of time between the prophetic statement and its fulfillment. Suggestions as to what "might" happen in the future do not qualify as prophetic pronouncements. Rather, the prophecy must precede the fulfillment in a significant fashion, and there must be no chance whatsoever of the prophet having the ability to influence the outcome.

- c. The prophecy must be stated in clear, understandable terms.

**Roger Dickson has noted:** "Prophecies must be sufficiently clear in order for the observer to be able to link pronouncement with fulfillment. If a prophecy is not understandable enough so as to allow the observer to depict its fulfillment, then what good would the prophecy be? (1997, p. 346).

- d. The prophecy must not have historical overtones. In other words, true prophecy should not be based on past (or current) societal or economic conditions.

**Pierson amplified this point by stating that:** "There should have been nothing in previous history which makes it possible to forecast a like event in the future" (1913, p. 75).

- e. A clear, understandable, exact prophecy must have a clear, understandable, exact fulfillment. It is not enough to suggest that a certain event came true with a "high degree of probability." The fulfillment must be unmistakable, and must match the prophecy in every detail.

f. Two questions, then, are in order: (1) does the Bible employ predictive prophecy; and (2) if it does, can the predictive prophecy be proven true? The answer to both questions is a resounding "yes!" Further, the Bible's prophecy fits the above standards perfectly each and every time.

12. Now let us investigate fulfilled prophecy in the Bible.

a. **The city of Tyre** - Ezekiel 26:3-5, 12-14,21 (550 B.C.) Ezekiel 26:3-5

1) This was proven true in the 19th century

2) Founded at the start of the third millennium B.C., Tyre originally consisted of a mainland settlement and a modest island city that lay a short distance off shore. But it was not until the first millennium B.C. that the city experienced its golden age.

3) In the 10th century B.C. Hiram, King of Tyre, joined two islets by landfill. Later he extended the city further by reclaiming a considerable area from the sea. Phoenician expansion began about 815 B.C. when traders from Tyre founded Carthage in North Africa. Eventually its colonies spread around the Mediterranean and Atlantic, bringing to the city a flourishing maritime trade. But prosperity and power make their own enemies.

4) Early in the sixth century B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, laid siege to the walled city for thirteen years. Tyre stood firm, but it was probable that at this time the residents of the mainland city abandoned it for the safety of the island.

5) In 332 B.C. Alexander the Great set out to conquer this strategic coastal base in the war between the Greeks and the Persians. Unable to storm the city, he blockaded Tyre for seven months. Again Tyre held on. But the conqueror used the debris of the abandoned mainland city to build a causeway and once within reach of the city walls, Alexander used his siege engines to batter and finally breach the fortifications. It is said that Alexander was so enraged at the Tyrians' defense and the loss of his men that he destroyed half the city. The town's 30,000 residents were massacred or sold into slavery.

6) Tyre and the whole of ancient Syria fell under Roman rule in 64 B.C.

b. **The city of Babylon** - In Isaiah 13:19-22 and Jer. 50:12-13; 51: 25-26, 36-37, the Bible predicts the destruction of the city of Babylon. These books were written in about 700 and 600 B.C. (respectively) - Proven true 1859 A.D. in the 19th century

1) In giving consideration to the "time" factor in prophecies regarding the destruction of Babylon, two things must be kept in view. First, there was to be an **initial** defeat of the superpower. Second, afterward there would be a **gradual but progressive degeneration** of the locale that ultimately would result in total ruin. At this point, we will consider only the first of these matters.

2) After Judah's good king, Josiah (639-608 B.C.), died during the battle of Megiddo, he was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, a miserable failure who reigned only three months. Jehoahaz was taken captive to Egypt (2 Kings 23:30-34), where, as Jeremiah prophesied, he died (Jeremiah 22:11-12). Then Jehoiakim, Josiah's second son, came to Judah's throne. He reigned eleven years (608-597 B.C.). During his administration, the compassionate Jeremiah, via his prophetic proclamations, was attempting to bring the southern kingdom to a state of repentance with little success, I might add. Let us focus momentarily upon the oracles of Jeremiah, chapter 25.

3) The material of this important chapter is dated.

a. Jer. 25:1

b. The following prophecies can be dated to 605 B.C.

4) In Jeremiah 25:11-12, we have the downfall of Babylon foretold

5) Almost three-quarters of a century before Babylon fell, when there was absolutely no indication of Chaldean vulnerability, Jeremiah announced the impending doom of the ancient world's superpower. There simply was no natural way he could have "guessed" it.

## **Who would overthrow mighty Babylon?**

6) Isaiah 21:2

"Elam is here used to facilitate the Hebrews' understanding of the source of the impending invasion, since Persia was not yet prominent. Later, Elam is

considered as a part of the Persian empire..." (Jackson, 1991, p. 48).

7) Skinner observed that Elam and Media were [t]he dominions of Cyrus. The former lay east of the Tigris and north of the Persian Gulf; Media was the mountainous district adjoining it on the north. Cyrus, according to the Babylonian records, was originally king of Anzan, in the north of Elam; in 549 he conquered Media, uniting the two in one kingdom (1963, 1:170).

8) Rawlinson noted that "Elam" is named because it was familiar to the Hebrews, whereas "Persia" would have been a designation alien to them at the time of Isaiah's writing (1950, 10:336). What precision!

9) Again, Isaiah detailed the conquering exploits of Cyrus, leader of the Medo-Persian forces, Isaiah 45:1.

This prophecy was uttered two centuries before the birth of the Persian monarch,

10) Jeremiah was equally specific regarding the invaders of Babylon, Jer. 51:11

11) Jehovah has plans for Babylon. He will destroy it by means of the "kings" (tribal rulers) of the Medes.

a. The accuracy of the biblical text is demonstrated by the precise terminology used.

b. As Wiseman has noted "Babylonian texts (Nabonidus) show that the title 'king of the Medes' (11) was correctly in use in 544 B.C." (Wise man, 1979, p. 849).

12) The historical facts are not disputed.

a. The Babylonian ruler, Nebuchadnezzar (605-562 B.C.), was succeeded by his son, Evil-Merodach (562-560 B.C.), who is mentioned in 2 Kings 25:27-30 and in Jeremiah 52:31-34.

b. Next came Neriglissar (560-556 B.C.), an evil conspirator who was defeated and slain in battle by the Medes and Persians (Sanderson, et al., 1900, 1:54).

- c. Labashi-Marduk subsequently came to the Chaldean throne in 556 B.C., but was assassinated after a few months.
- d. Finally, there was Nabonidus, who ruled from 556-539 B.C. His son, Belshazzar, was co-regent with his father.
- e. It was Belshazzar who was occupying the city of Babylon when it fell, Daniel 5:1ff.
- f. Inscriptions have been discovered which make it clear that Nabonidus had entrusted the "kingship" of the capital city to his son while he campaigned in Arabia for about a decade (Vol, 1988, 1:276).
- g. When Cyrus advanced against Babylon, Nabonidus marched east to meet him, but fled before the Persian general's army.
- h. Later, after Cyrus had captured the city (539 B.C.), Nabonidus surrendered to the Persians. And so, the biblical prophecies regarding the conquerors of the city of Babylon were fulfilled exactly.

## **How would it happen**

13) The Jews in captivity could lamented: "By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept, When we remembered Zion" (Psalm 137:1).

- a. Just to the west of the city was a huge lake-basin, some thirty-five feet deep and covering forty miles square, but which, at the time of the invasion, was but a marsh.
- b. Cyrus stationed soldiers at the point where the river entered the city, and also where it exited.

14) The Euphrates river ran under the walls through the center of Babylon. From the river, canals quite broad and sometimes navigable were cut in every direction.

15) At a given time, he diverted the Euphrates from its bed into the marshy lake area. His forces then entered Babylon under the city walls (Herodotus, I.191).

16) Consider what the prophets declared regarding Babylon's fall.

**Isaiah 44:27**

Isaiah, wrote this more than a century and a half earlier,

Jeremiah 50:38, 51:36).

The language is quite consistent with the diversion of the river, which allowed the Persians to take the city virtually unopposed (see Wise man, 1979, p. 849).

Jeremiah 50:24

The term "snare" suggests that the citizens of the city would be taken by surprise; they "were not aware" of what was happening until it was too late Jer. 50:24b.

Herodotus wrote: "Had the Babylonians been apprised of what Cyrus was about, or had they noticed their danger, they would never have allowed the Persians to enter their city" (I.191).

17) One aspect in the rapid conquest of the city had to do with the fact that the Babylonians, in their smug security, were engaged in drunken festivities; thus, they were wholly unconcerned about the enemy beyond their massive walls.

Note though what Lord had declared:

Jeremiah 51:39

Jeremiah 51:57

18) Herodotus recorded that the citizens of the central section of the city did not know that Babylon had fallen for a good while because "they were engaged in a festival, continued dancing and reveling until they learnt the capture" (I.191). Similarly, Xenophon said that "there was a festival in Babylon, in which all the Babylonians drank and reveled the whole night" (VII.5.15).

## **Other Prophetic Facts**

19) The prophets indicated that when Babylon was taken her rich treasures would be looted, **Isaiah 45:3; 50:37**.

20) The treasures of Babylon were splendid beyond description. Herodotus, in describing just one of the temples in the city, declared that it contained more than twenty tons of gold (I.183).

21) Jeremiah 50:24-26

[granaries, ASV footnote]

Xenophon reports that Babylon "was furnished with provisions for more than twenty years" (VIII.5.13).

But God emptied them just as His prophet had announced!

22) What about Babylon's famous walls?

An ancient historian, Diodorus, stated that it took 200,000 men a full year to construct these fortifications (Fausset, 1990 p. 181).

But note Jeremiah 51:58

Where are Babylon's walls, and her one hundred gates of brass (Herodotus, I.179) today?

**The demolition of the city.**

23) The prophets repeatedly proclaimed the eventual utter desolation of ancient Babylon. Isaiah gave some particulars.

**Isaiah 13:19-22.**

Jeremiah chapters 50 and 51

24) First, there was to be an **initial defeat** of Babylon, which we have seen.

25). Second, afterwards there would be a **gradual but progressive degeneration** of the locale, which ultimately would become a site of absolute waste. In the following section, we will catalogue the destruction's and degeneration of once-great Babylon.

After a siege of two years, the city of Babylon was captured by Cyrus, commander of the Medo-Persian forces, in October of 539 B.C.

This brought the Neo-Babylonian empire (614-539 B.C.) to a close.

Significant damage to the city was not inflicted at this time, though some of the walls may have been broken down, at least partially.

26) Following a rebellion of the Babylonian subjects, Darius Hystaspes took the city again in 520 B.C.

He demolished the walls significantly and destroyed the huge gates, Jeremiah 51:58.

Herodotus wrote: "Thus was Babylon taken for a second time. Darius having become master of the place, destroyed the wall, and tore down all the gates; for Cyrus had done neither the one nor the other when he took Babylon" (III.159).

27) Apparently, however, there was some subsequent repair of the walls (see McClintock and Strong, 1969, 1:596).

During the reign of Xerxes (485-465 B.C.), the temple of Bel (Marduk) was plundered and destroyed. Much of the city was turned into ruins in 483 B.C., and the walls were dismantled further.

28) Babylon again fell to Alexander the Great in 331 B.C.

As Alexander neared the city, priests and nobles went out to meet him with lavish gifts, surrendering the city.

Alexander proposed that he would rebuild the temple of Marduk. He employed 10,000 men to clear the dirt and rubble. They labored in vain for two months. Alexander died and the work was abandoned (Rollin, 1857, 1:575).

A clay tablet has been found that confirms this enterprise. It records that in the sixth year of Alexander's reign, he made a payment of ten manehs of silver for "clearing away the dust of Esagila [Marduk's great temple]" (King, 1919, 2:284-288).

29) In 270 B.C. Antiochus Soter, a Greek ruler, restored several of the temples in Babylon, but the general decay of the city continued.

30) In the time of Strabo (at the end of the 1st century B.C.), the site was in ruins. Jerome (fourth century A.D.), learned that Babylon had been used as a wild game park for the amusement of numerous Persian dignitaries (McClintock and Strong, 1969, 1:596).

31) In the fifth century A.D., according to Cyril of Alexandria, due to the bursting of canal banks, Babylon became a swamp (Jeremias, 1911, 1:294).

32) Volney, the French atheist who was such a militant adversary of the Bible, wrote in his book, *The Ruins of Empires*, in 1791. Therein he stated: "Nothing is left of Babylon but heaps of earth, trodden under foot of men" (as quoted in Holman, 1926, p. 333).

Note Jeremiah 50:26

It is ironic that a skeptic should lend support to confirming the accuracy of the biblical narrative!

33) When archaeologist Austen Layard explored Babylon in the mid-nineteenth century, he described the heaps of rubbish that rendered the area a "naked and hideous waste" (1856, p. 413).

34) Later, when Robert Koldewey excavated the city for eighteen seasons beginning in 1899, he said that as he gazed over the ruins, he could not help but be reminded of Jeremiah 50:39 (1914, p. 314). He reported that many of the sites were covered with forty to eighty feet of sand and rubble.

35) Around 1969 an air-view of Babylon, once the world's greatest city shows only a mound of dirt and broken-down walls (Boyd, 1969, pp. 153ff.).

36) In recent years, Saddam Hussein attempted to build a tourist center near the site of old Babylon. The 1990 Persian Gulf War seriously impaired his plans.

37) The accuracy of the dozens of prophecies regarding the fall of Babylon has baffled skeptics for generations.

38) So remarkable has been the precision of the fulfillment that critics often have resorted to **redating** the predictions in both

Isaiah and Jeremiah so as to make them appear to be records of **history** instead of **prophecy**!

For example, in commenting upon the oracles of Jeremiah, chapters 50-51, James Philip Hyatt wrote: "Some of the poems in this present collection seem to reflect the city's downfall, as prophecies **after the event** rather than predictions..." (1956, 5:1124, emp. added). Such a view ignores the evidence for dating the books at a much earlier period.

A former professor in a Christian university has even capitulated to this liberal viewpoint. Anthony Ash asserted: Dating chapter 50 is virtually impossible. The arrangement of the text indicates that it was a composite, probably containing materials from different periods.... The chapter may have reached this form near the mid-sixth century B.C., when the fall of Babylon appeared likely (1987, p. 309, emp. added).

39) Upon this basis, then, one supposes that Jeremiah or whoever put the composite together! simply made a **lucky guess** as to the fall of Babylon. Such a view is disgusting, and unworthy of any Christian writer.

40) The prophetic details regarding the fall of ancient Babylon, as minutely recorded in the Old Testament narratives, truly are astounding. This is but another example of the amazing evidence that demonstrates the character of the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

### c. **The Assyrians**

1) During a time in the history of Israel in which God's people had delved deeply into idolatry, the prophet Isaiah foretold that God would raise up the Assyrians, as His "rod of anger" in order to punish the disobedient Hebrews (Isaiah 10:5-6). But, Isaiah noted, after that had been accomplished, God would see to it that the Assyrians themselves were punished for their own wicked deeds (Isaiah 10:12,24-25).

2) Archaeology has revealed some impressive facts regarding this prophecy.

3) Assyrian records discovered in recent years discuss the fact that in the reign of Hosea, king of Israel, Shalmanesar, ruler of Assyria, assaulted Samaria, the capital city of Israel. However, he died before completing the assault, which was taken up by his successor, Sargon, who captured the city (cf. 1 Kings 18:10). An Assyrian clay prism comment on the fact that 27,290 Israelite captives were taken in the conflict.

4) Almost twenty-five years later, the Assyrian king Sennacherib once again invaded Palestine (2 Kings 18:13ff.).

Archaeological records report that 46 Judean cities were captured, and that 200,150 Israelites were taken into captivity.

Jerusalem, however, was not conquered a fact that is noteworthy, since 2 Kings 19:32-34 predicted that Sennacherib would be unable to take the holy city.

The Taylor Cylinder, discovered at Nineveh in 1830, presents the history of the Assyrians' assault, and states that king Hezekiah of Judah was "shut up like a bird in a cage. "Yet Jerusalem itself was spared?

5) Were the wicked Assyrians punished? They were. The account, provided in 2 Kings 19:35, indicates that in a single night, God annihilated 185,000 Assyrian soldiers who had encircled Jerusalem.

In addition, the prophecy stated that Sennacherib would return to his home, and there fall by the sword (2 Kings 19:7). Some twenty years later, he was assassinated by his own sons, who smote him with the sword while he was worshipping pagan deities (Isaiah 37:37-38).

### **c. Prophecy and The Life of Jesus**

1) Although there are over three hundred prophecies concerning Jesus we want to focus on just a few. Namely those offered by writers we know lived and wrote well before the time of Christ.

2) In determining the validity of the prophecies we will consider we must first establish some dates for the OT books these prophecies will come from.

3) By establishing these dates we can be sure that what was prophesied was written well before the actual event took place.

4) The earliest record we have of the three fold division of the Old Testament is in the prologue of the book Ecclesiasticus (ca 130 B.C.). The prologue, written by the author's grandson says: "The Law, and the Prophets, and the other books of the fathers."<sup>1</sup>

5) With the finds of the Dead Sea Scrolls at the Qumran community we can date the Old Testament books to as early as 250 B.C.

6) Hershel Shanks is a founder, editor and publisher of Biblical Archaeology Review and Bible Review writes:

*The documents date no later than 68 C.E. and they go back to about 250 B.C.E., so it is very early. Don't forget you have to distinguish between the date of the copy and the date the text was composed, just as we do with the Bible. Your Bible may have been printed in 1987, but the text was written thousands of years ago. In the same way, you may have a text from Qumran that was written in 100 B.C.E., but was actually composed 200 years earlier.<sup>2</sup> (This would date the writings found at Qumran to 300 B.C.E. J.D.)*

7) The Septuagint, which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament was begun in the third century B.C.<sup>3</sup>

8) The most famous account of the translation of the Jewish law into Greek is the so-called Letter of Aristeas (Greek texts: P. Wendland, *Aristeae ad Philocratem Epistula* [1900]; H. St. J. Thackeray, appendix to Swete, *Intro.*, pp. 501-574.<sup>4</sup>

9) This intriguing document purports to be a letter by an official in the court of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus in Egypt (285-246 B.C.) and sent to his brother Philocrates. The document describes how the royal librarian at Alexandria, allegedly Demetrius of Phalerum, convinced the king of the importance of securing for his library a copy of the Jewish Law. Since, however, the law existed only in

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<sup>1</sup> Evidence That Demands A Verdict vol. 1, p.31

<sup>2</sup> The Dead Sea Scrolls After Forty Years, p.17

<sup>3</sup> I.S.B.E , 1988, vol. IV. p.401

<sup>4</sup> I.S.B.E , 1988, vol. IV. p.401,402

the Hebrew language, it first had to be translated.<sup>5</sup>

10) Although it may be difficult to disentangle fact from fiction in Aristeas and equally difficult to determine his real intent, most would agree that the story at least constitutes one bit of evidence for the translation of the Pentateuch in Alexandria in the 3rd century B.C.<sup>6</sup>

11) For external evidence that most of the OT existed in Greek by the late 2nd cent. B.C., Thackeray pointed to the Prologue to Sirach (*ca.* 132-100 B.C.), which mentions the prior translation of “the Law itself, the prophecies, and the rest of the books.”<sup>7</sup>

12) With that said let’s consider some prophecies concerning Jesus. To support the prophecies we will consider some authors outside of the Bible that speak of the life of Jesus and then tie this to the Biblical prophecies of His life.

13) Josephus, a Jewish Historian, born A.D 37 and living during the times of the NT writings has this to say about Jesus: “Now there was about this time, Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man, for he was a doer of wonderful works, - a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews, and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ; and when pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him **to the cross**, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him, for he appeared to them alive again the third day, as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousands other wonderful things concerning him; and the tribe of the Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.”<sup>8</sup>

14) Lucian of Samosata, a satirist of the second century, who spoke scornfully of Christ and the Christians connected them with the synagogues in Palestine and alluded to Christ as: “...the man who was **crucified** in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world...”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> I.S.B.E , 1988, vol. IV. p.402

<sup>6</sup> I.S.B.E , 1988, vol. IV. p.402

<sup>7</sup> I.S.B.E , 1988, vol. IV. p.403

<sup>8</sup> Josephus Complete Works, Antiquities of the Jews, p.379

<sup>9</sup> Evidence That Demands A Verdict vol. 1., p.82

15) Concerning the crucifixion, when one was going to be crucified their clothes were stripped by the soldiers detailed to carry out the sentence, who immediately appropriated it as their lawful booty. He was then laid on the ground, the crossbeam was thrust beneath his shoulders, and his hands were fastened to the extremities, sometimes with cords, but more usually, as in the case of Jesus with nails. ...Finally the feet were fastened to the lower part of the upright, either with nails or with cords. ...It was a custom in Jerusalem to provide some alleviation for the physical tortures and mental sufferings of the crucified by giving him a stupefying draught.<sup>10</sup>

- 16) Let's now consider the prophecy's concerning Jesus' crucifixion
- a) Isa. 53:8 By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living, For the transgression of my people to whom the stroke {was due?}
  - b) Psalm 22:16, "For dogs have surrounded me; A band of evildoers has encompassed me; They pierced my hands and my feet."
  - c) Ps. 22:18 "They divide my garments among them, And for my clothing they cast lots."
  - d) Ps. 69:21 "They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink."

## **B. The scientific facts found in the Bible.**

1. When determining whether the Bible is the word of God we find that it is its own worst enemy, in that many of the statements made are of such a nature that the Bible will stand or fall by them.
2. This is especially true in regards to scientific facts found in the Bible
  - a. We would suppose that the creator of the universe, if he was revealing His will, and in that will he mentioned certain scientific facts about the creation, they would be true.
  - b. This is in fact what we find within the pages of the Bible. Although the wording of these facts is in non-scientific language, what they describe is scientifically true.
  - c. Dr. Henry Morris
  - d. Dr. Jean Morton
3. With this in mind let us consider some scientific facts that support the authenticity of the bible.

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<sup>10</sup> Hastings Dictionary of the Bible, 1989, p. 170

4. To begin, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) first announced that there are only five manifestations of the unknowable” in existence - time, force, action, space, and matter.

- a. In turning to Genesis 1:1 we find all of these present.
- b. God used nonscientific terms to express the scientific fact
  1. In the beginning - time
  2. God - force
  3. Created - is action
  4. The heavens - space
  5. The earth, matter

5. For many years people of the world held differing views as to the shape of the earth.

- a. It was not until the time of Magellan, 1480-1521, did someone sail around the earth and prove it round.
- b. The Bible had always testified to the fact that the earth was round,  
**Prov. 8:27**  
**Isa. 40:22**

6. For years people of the world held differing views as to how the earth was held in its place in space.

- a. The ancient Greeks and Romans were the most advanced people of their time, yet they believed that the earth was held in place by poles or the neck of Atlas.
- b. The Bible clearly shows that the earth hangs on nothing, **Job 26:7**

7. Dehoff writes that scientist have discovered that there is a great empty space in the North sky. It contains no moving planets and shining stars.

- a. See photo
- b. In God’s discussion with Job, Job is told of this emptiness, **Job 26:7**

8. At one time man believed that the stars were stationary.

- a. The Bible states that the stars actually moved and are group together.
- b. **Job. 38:31-33**

9. Singing stars

- a. **Job 38:7**
- b. Radio Astronomy

10. Man once believed the sun to be stationary.

- a. But it is not
- b. **Psalm 19:5,6**

11. What about light and darkness?
  - a. Concerning light, **Job 38:19**
  - b. Light is said to dwell in a "way" [Hebrew, *derek*—literally a "traveled path or road"]
  - c. Genesis 16:7
  - d. Dr. Morton says...
  - e. As for darkness, Job 38:19.
  - f. Darkness is said to be a "place" [Hebrew, *maqom*—literally a "place, a spot, as standing"]
  - g. **Genesis 1:9; 28:11**

### **Oceanography**

12. One of the greatest discoveries is found in **Psalm 8:8**. Here David writes, "The birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas."
  - a. Matthew Fontaine Murray, the founder of the science of Oceanography, heard this verse from the Bible while his son read to him.
  - b. At that time man was unaware of the "paths of the sea"
  - c. When Matthew Fontaine Murray recovered from his illness he began his search for these paths of the sea and by 1854, he had not only discovered them but charted them as well.
  - d. He was the first to recognize that the seas were circulating systems between wind and water.
  - e. These paths of the sea are our modern day shipping lanes.
13. It is a proven scientific fact that there are fresh springs of water in the ocean.
  - a. This was not discovered until 1930.
  - b. Off the coast of Australia fresh water may be dipped in abundance
  - c. Job records God stating that there are springs, **Job 38:16**
14. Recesses of the deep?
  - a. **Job 38:16**
  - b. Recess means hidden, and know only by investigation.
  - c. The word deep is seas or oceans
  - d. Channels of the seas (David),
  - e. **2 Sam. 22:16**
15. The water cycle
  - a. **Job 36:27-29**
  - b. **Eccl. 11:3a**
  - c. **Amos 5:8b, 9:6b**

d. Hydrological Cycle

**Environment**

16. The Bible records the fact that the wind has weight, **Job:28:25**. We call this the barometric pressure today.

**Biology**

17. Man made from dust.

- a. **Gen. 2:7**
- b. NASA research

18. Producing after your own kind

- a. **Gen. 1:11,12,21,24**
- b. The laws of genetics and heredity ensure that things produce after their own kind.
- c. Laws of genetics not instituted until 1900's

19. Different kinds of flesh?

- a. **1Cor. 15:39**
- b. These fleshs are different in their biochemical makeup.

20. Life is in the blood

- a. **Lev. 17:11**
- b. Dr. Bert Thompson

21. Circumcision

- a. **Gen. 17:12**
- b. Professor H. Dam

**C. The unity and uniqueness of the Bible text.**

1. Another proof that the Bible is the inspired word of God is the unity and uniqueness of the text itself.

2. From the beginning man has determined to undermine the legitimacy of the Bible. Even in modern times we see this attack. Dan Barker, a former preacher has suggested, "the New Testament Jesus is a myth."<sup>11</sup> In this statement there would also be the denial of His teachings. The question is why?

3. The Bible is unique in its message that uniqueness involves a change that is to take place in mans life.

Those that reject the Bible do so in many cases, because they do not wish to make

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<sup>11</sup> Dan Barker, "Losing Faith in Faith, 1992, pg. 378

that change.

4. The great infidel, Aldous Huxley wrote: “I had motives for not wanting the world to have meaning; consequently, assumed it had none, and was able without any difficulty to find satisfying reasons for this assumption.... The philosopher who finds no meaning in the world is not concerned exclusively with a problem in pure metaphysics; he is also concerned to prove there is no valid reason why he personally should not do as he wants to do....For myself, as no doubt for most of my contemporaries, the philosophy of meaninglessness was essentially an instrument of liberation. The liberation we desired was simultaneously liberation from certain political and economic system and liberation from a certain system of morality. We objected to the morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom.”<sup>12</sup>

5. Professor M. Montiero-Williams, former Boden professor of Sanskrit, spent 42 years studying Eastern books and said in comparing them with the Bible; “Pile them, if you will, on the left side of your 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 can not be bridged over by any science of religious thought.”<sup>13</sup>

6. In his statement Professor Montiero-Williams testifies to the uniqueness of the Bible. But why or how is the Bible unique from other books?

a. It is unique in its continuity.

1. It was written over a 1,500 year span.

2. It was written over 40 generations.

3. It was written by over 40 authors from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc.:

a. Moses, a political leader, trained in the universities of Egypt.

b. Peter, a fisherman

c. Amos, a herdsman

d. Joshua, a military general

e. Nehemiah, a cupbearer

f. Daniel, a prime minister

g. Luke, a doctor

h. Solomon, a king

i. Matthew, a tax collector

j. Paul, a rabbi

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<sup>12</sup> Huxley, Aldous “Confessions of a Professed Atheist” 1966

<sup>13</sup> Collett, Sidney. “*All About The Bible*” pgs. 314,315 Old Tappan: Revell, n.d.

4. It was written in different places
  - a. Moses in the wilderness
  - b. Jeremiah in a dungeon
  - c. Daniel on a hillside and in a palace
  - d. Paul inside prison walls
  - e. Luke while traveling
  - f. John on the isle of Patmos
5. It was written in three languages:
  - a. Hebrew was the language of the Old Testament.
    1. In 2Kings 18:26-28 “the language of Judah”
    2. In Isa. 19:18 “the language of Canaan.”
  - b. Aramaic was the common language of the Near East until the time of Alexander the Great (6th century b.c. - 4th century b.c.)
  - c. Greek was the New Testament language. It was the international language at the time of Christ.
6. F.F. Bruce wrote: “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.” He concludes: “The Bible, at first sight, appears to be a collection of literature-mainly Jewish. If we inquire into the circumstances under which the various Biblical documents were written,we find that they were written at intervals over a space of 1400 years. The writers wrote in various lands, from Italy in the west to Mesopotamia and possibly Persia in the east. The writers themselves were a heterogeneous number of people, not only separated from each other by hundreds of years and hundreds of miles, but belonging to the most diverse walks of life....The writings themselves belong to a great variety of literary types. They include history, ;law (civil, criminal, ethical, ritual, sanitary), religious poetry, didactic treatises, lyric poetry, parable and allegory, biography, personal correspondence, personal memoirs and diaries, in addition to the distinctively Biblical types of prophecy and apocalyptic.

*“For all that, the Bible is not simply an anthology; there is a unity which binds the whole together. An anthology is compiled by an anthologist, but no anthologist compiled the Bible”<sup>14</sup>*

- b. It is unique in its circulation.
  1. The Bible has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book. There have been more copies

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<sup>14</sup> Bruce, F.F. *“The Books and the Parchments”* pgs. 88,89

produced of its entirety and more portions and selections than any other book in history.

2. In 1932, it is said that 1,330,213,815 copies had been printed.

3. In 1947 14,108,436 copies printed

4. In 1951 952,666 copies printed

5. In 1955 25,393,161 copies printed

6. In 1963 54,123,820 copies printed

7. In 1965 76,953,369 copies printed

8. in 1966 87,398,961 copies printed

9. The Cambridge History of the Bible: “No other book has known anything approaching this constant circulation.”

10. This doesn't prove the Bible is the Word of God. But it does factually show the Bible is unique.

c. It is unique in its translation

1. The Bible was one of the first major books translated (Septuagint, 250 B.C.)

2. Encyclopedia Britannica says that “by 1966 the whole Bible had appeared ...in 240 languages and dialects...one or more whole books of the Bible in 739 additional ones, a total publication of 1,280 languages.

3. 3,000 Bible translators between 1950-1960 were at work translating the Scriptures.

d. It is unique in its survival

1. Bernard Ramm speaks of the accuracy and number of biblical manuscripts: “Jews preserved it as no other manuscript has ever been preserved. With their massora (parve, 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 counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero and Seneca?

2. Being written on material that perishes, having to be copied and recopied for hundreds of years before the invention of the printing press, did not diminish its style, correctness nor existence. The Bible, compared with other ancient writings, has more manuscript evidence than any 10 pieces of classical literature combined.

3. The Bible has withstood vicious attacks of its enemies as no other book. Many have tried to burn it, ban it, and “outlaw it from the days of the Roman emperors to present-day Communist-dominated countries.

4. In A.D. 303, Diocletian issued an edict to stop Christians from worshiping and to destroy their Scriptures: “...an imperial letter was everywhere promulgated, ordering the razing of the churches

to the ground and the destruction by fire of the Scriptures, and proclaiming that those who held high positions would lose all civil rights, while those in households, if they persisted in their profession of Christianity, would be deprived of their liberty.” The historic irony of the edict to destroy the Bible is that Eusebius records the edict given 25 years later by Constantine, the emperor following Diocletian, that 50 copies of the Scriptures should be prepared at the expense of the government.

5. Bernard Ramm adds: “A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put.

No other book has been chopped, knifed, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. What book on philosophy or religion or psychology or *belles lettres* of classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? with such venom and skepticism? with such thoroughness and erudition? upon every chapter, line and tenet?

“The Bible is still loved by millions, read by millions, and studied by millions.”

e. It is unique in its teachings on the characters.

1. Lewis S Chafer, founder and former president of Dallas

Theological Seminary, puts it this way: “The Bible is not such a book a man would write if he could, or could write if he would.”

2. The Bible deals very frankly with the sins of its characters.

read the biographies today, and see how they try to cover up, overlook or ignore the shady side of people. Take the great literary geniuses; most are painted as saints. The Bible does not do it that way. It simply tells it like it is.

a) The sins of the people are denounced - Deut. 9:24

b) Sins of the patriarchs - Gen. 12:11-13; 49:5-7

c) Evangelists paint their own faults and the faults of the apostles - Matt. 8:10-26; 26:31-56; Mark 6:52; 8:18; John 10:6; 16:32

d) Disorder of the churches - 1Cor. 1:11; 15:12; 2Cor. 2:4

f. It is unique in its influence.

1. The historian Philip Schaff vividly describes its uniqueness along with its savior. “This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar,

Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, He set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times.

2. Kenneth Scott Latourette, former Yale Historian, says: “It is evidence of His importance, of the effect that he has had upon history and presumably, of the baffling mystery of his being that no other life ever lived on this planet has evoked so huge a volume of literature among so many peoples and languages, and that, far from ebbing, the flood continues to mount.

**Conclusion:** The above does not prove the Bible is the Word of God, but it does prove that it is unique above all other books. It is different from all others and has no equal.

A professor once remarked:

“If you are an intelligent person, you will read the one book that has drawn more attention than any other, if you are searching for the truth”

If you ask someone to provide proof for why they believe the Bible to be a fraud and they provide no proof, and they ask you for your proof that it is the word of God and you state, because it says it is, you have greater proof than they. Even if they consider your proof weak it is more than they have, which is nothing.

The claim it makes of being the word of God cannot just be discounted, just as the claim of innocence is not discounted until proven otherwise.

## The Canonization of Scriptures / The What? (Part 2)

A. In answering the question is the Bible text reliable, we can turn our attentions to the canonization of the scriptures to help find the answer.

B. To begin we must understand what we mean when we speak of the canon.

1. The term *kanon* (canon) had a literal meaning of rod, ruler, staff, or a measuring rod. This literal concept provided the basis for a later extended use of the word meaning “standard,” “norm.”
2. From the literal “ruler,” the word was extended to mean a rule or standard for anything. In early Christian usage, it came to mean rule of faith, normative writings, or authoritative Scripture.
3. The word *kanon* was applied to the Bible in both an active and a passive sense: one in which it was the canon or standard, and the other in which it was canonized or recognized to be canonical by the church.

C. In regards to the Old Testament scriptures, the ancient Jews did not use the word *kaneh* (canon) in reference to their ancient writings. Nevertheless, several other phrases or concepts used by the Jews are equivalent.

### 1. Sacred writings:

- a. An inspired or canonical writing was considered sacred and was kept by the Ark of the Covenant (**Deut. 31:24-26**).
- b. After the temple was built, the sacred writings were kept in the Temple (**2Kings 22:8**).
- c. This special attention and reverence paid to the Jewish Scriptures is tantamount to saying that they were considered canonical.

### 2. Authoritative writings:

- a. Another concept that is synonymous with canonicity is “authority.”
- b. The rulers of Israel were to be subject to the authority of the Scriptures, (**Deut. 17:18-19**).
- c. This same concept is seen with Joshua, (**Josh. 1:8**).

### 3. Prophetic writings:

- a. **Josephus in his *Contra Apion* 1.8** says: “from Artaxerxes until our time

everything has been recorded, but has not been deemed worthy of like credit with what preceded, because the exact succession of the prophets ceased.

But what faith we have placed in our own writings is evident by our conduct; for though so long a time is now passed, no one has dared to add anything to them, or take anything from them, or to alter anything in them.

b. **The statement of the Talmud supports this. Seder Olam Rabba 30 says,** “Up to this point [the time of Alexander the Great] the prophets prophesied through the Holy Spirit; from this time onward incline thine ear and listen to the sayings of the wise.”

c. **Roger Beckwith notes the following rabbinical statements** on the cessation of prophecy:

1). ‘With the death of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi the latter prophets, the Holy Spirit ceased out of Israel’ (Tos. Sotah 13.2: baraita in Bab. Yoma 9b, Bab. Sotah 48b and Bab. Sanhedrin 11a).

2). ‘Rab Samuel bar Inia said, in the name of Rab Aha, “The Second Temple lacked five things which the First Temple possessed, namely, the fire, the ark, the Urim and Thummim, the oil of anointing and the Holy Spirit [of prophecy]” ‘ (Jer. Taanith 2.1; Jer. Makkoth 2.4-8; Bab. Yoma 21b).

e. What this shows is that only the books written from Moses to Malachi, in the succession of Hebrew prophets, were considered to be canonical.

f. **Beckwith notes,** “an era is in view, which is variously described as the death of Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, the end of the empire of the Persians, the destruction of the First Temple or the transition from the First temple to the Second.”

g. So then, if a book were written after the prophetic period, it was not considered canonical. If it were written within the prophetic period, in the succession of the Hebrew prophets, it was canonical.

h. In brief, what were later called canonical writings were by the Jews considered to be those sacred and authoritative writings of the Hebrew prophets from Moses to Malachi. So sacred were these holy writings that they were preserved by the Ark of the Covenant in the Temple. The Hebrew canon, then, was that collection of writings which, because they possessed divine inspiration and authority, were the norm or rule for the believer’s faith and conduct.

D. One question that might be asked is “How was canonicity determined?”

1. In a real sense, **Christ is the key to the inspiration and canonization of the Scriptures.**

a. It was He who confirmed the inspiration of the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament.

1) In **Mark 7:5-13** Jesus refutes the traditions of the Jews.

2) In doing this He upholds the OT as canon.

b. Jesus also promised that the Holy Spirit would direct the apostles into all the truth. The fulfillment of that promise resulted in the writing and collection of the New Testament, **John 16:12-15** Being from the Holy Spirit it would also be considered canon.

2. **Carl F.H. Henry** writes: Jesus altered the prevailing Jewish view of the Scripture in several ways: (1) He subjected the authority of tradition to the superior and normative authority of the Old Testament; (2) He emphasized that He Himself fulfills the messianic promise of the inspired writings; (3) He claimed for Himself an authority not below that of the Old Testament and definitively expounded the inner significance of the Law; (4) he inaugurated the new covenant escalating the Holy Spirit’s moral power as an internal reality; (5) He committed his apostles to the enlargement and completion of the Old Testament canon through their proclamation of the Spirit-given interpretation of his life and work. At the same time He identified Himself wholly with the revelational authority of Moses and the prophets - that is, with the Old Testament as an inspired literary canon - insisting that Scripture has sacred, authoritative and permanent validity, and that the revealed truth of God is conveyed in its teachings.

3. **Precisely speaking, canonicity is determined by God.** In other words, the reason there are only sixty-six books in the canon is that God inspired only that many. Only sixty-six books were found to have the stamp of divine authority, because God only stamped that many, or invested that number with authority for faith and practice.

4. **Some other thoughts** on how canonicity was determined.

a. *A book is valuable because it is canonical.* A given book is not canonical because it was found to be valuable. Rather, it was found to be valuable because it was determined to be canonical by God. In other words, **a book is not inspired because it is inspiring; it is inspiring because it is inspired**

b. *A book is canonical because it is inspired.* Edward J. Young presents the correct view, that inspiration determines canonicity, as he writes, **“When the word of God was written it became Scripture and, inasmuch as it had been spoken by God, possessed absolute authority. Since it was the Word of God, it was canonical. That which determines the canonicity of a book therefore, is the fact that the book is inspired by God.**

Hence a distinction is properly made between the authority which the Old Testament possesses as divinely inspired, and the recognition of that authority on the part of Israel.”

### **E. Summary**

1. The history of the word canon indicates a development from a literal rod or ruler to the concept of a standard for something.
2. Subsequently the word was applied to the rule of faith, that is, the normative writings or authoritative Scriptures, which were the standard of faith and practice.
3. The biblical view is that inspiration determines canonicity; a book is valuable because it is inspired, and not inspired because men found it valuable.
4. Canonicity is determined by God, not by the people of God.
5. The simple answer to “Why are there only these books in the Bible?” is that God inspired only these and no more. If God had given more books through more prophets, then there would be a larger canon.
6. Because propheticity determines canonicity, only prophetic books can be canonical.
7. Furthermore, it is probable that in God’s providence He has preserved all the prophetic books.
8. If so, then not only are all canonical books prophetic, but all prophetic books are canonical.
9. As Josh McDowell says, “One thing to keep in mind is that the church did not create the canon or books included in what we call Scripture. Instead, the church recognized the books that were inspired from their inception. They were inspired by God when written.”

## **The Canonization of Scriptures / The Why** (Part 3 )

**A.** In the first part of this lesson it was concluded that the canon of Scriptures is determined by God and that propheticity determines canonicity.

**B.** We also determined that the church did not create the canon or books included in what we call the Scriptures. The church simply recognized the books as inspired from their inception.

**C.** Since the books were recognized as inspired they became the standard by which God's people lived. They became the canon as they were written.

**D.** As we continue to study this concept of the canon we will now turn our attention to how these book came to be in their present form. We ask, why do we have the books we have?

**E.** It has already been indicated that God is the source of canonicity. A book is canonical because it is inspired, and it is inspired because God moved in and through the men who wrote it.

1. In this sense, canonicity is passive; it is something received from God.

2. There is also an active sense of the word canonization, the sense in which the people of God were active in the recognition and collection of the books God inspired.

3. The historical process of canonization is concerned with this later sense.

**F.** The historical process of canonization refers to man putting together those writings which were considered to be inspired of God.

**G.** As Gods word was being written and passed around it was a natural process which led it to be put into a collection of writings eventually known as the Bible. What led to this process is what we will now consider.

**H.** From the human point of view there were **several stimuli** for the collection and final canonization of inspired books.

1. *Books were prophetic:* The initial reason for collecting and preserving the inspired books was that they were prophetic. Since they were written by an apostle or prophet of God, they must be valuable, and if valuable, they should be preserved. This reasoning is apparent in apostolic times, by the collection and circulation of Paul's writings (cf. **2Pet. 3:15-16; Col.4:16**).

2. *Demands of the early church:* Closely connected with the foregoing reason were the theological and ethical demands of the early church. In order to know which books should be read in the churches (cf. **1Thess. 5:27** and **1Tim. 4:13**) and which books could be

definitely applied to the theological and practical problems of the Christian church (cf. **2Tim. 3:16-17**), it became necessary to have a complete collection of the books that could provide the authoritative norm for faith and practice.

**3. *Heretical stimulus:*** On the negative side there was the heretical stimulus. At the time of Paul penning 2Thess. there were letters being circulated claiming to have been written by the apostles, **2Thess. 2:1-3**. As early as A.D. 140 the heretical Marcion accepted only limited sections of the full New Testament canon. Marcion's heretical canon, consisted of only Luke's gospel and ten of Paul's epistles, pointed up clearly the need to collect a complete canon of New Testament Scriptures.

**4. *Missionary stimulus:*** On the positive side, there was the missionary stimulus. Christianity had spread rapidly to other countries, and there was the need to translate the Bible into those other languages. As early as the first half of the second century the Bible was translated into Syriac and Old Latin. But because the missionaries could not translate a Bible that did not exist, attention was necessarily drawn to the question of which books really belonged to the authoritative Christian canon.

**5. *Persecutions and politics:*** The final phase of full and general recognition of the whole canon of the New Testament writings also involved a negative and political stimulus. The Diocletian persecutions of about A.D. 302/303-5 provided forceful motivation for the church to sort, sift and settle on the New Testament Scriptures. During this persecution the Christian clergy were compelled under pain of death to surrender their church possessions and their sacred books to the Roman magistrates. Certainly the books they would risk their lives to preserve must have been considered sacred to them.

Even after Diocletian abdicated (305), the persecution begun in his reign continued until the edict of Toleration (311) and the edict of Milan (313).

Ironically enough within twenty-five years of the edict to destroy the Scriptures, Constantine took positive action to preserve them. He commissioned Eusebius, the historian, to prepare fifty copies of the Scriptures.

Both of those political actions prompted a careful examination and scrutiny of all religious writings in order to discover which were truly authoritative. And, in the same century as Diocletian's persecution and Constantine's letter, the church began to give official recognition to the twenty-seven books of the New Testament, that is, in A.D. 363 (at Laodicea), and in A.D. 397 (at Carthage).

## The Canonization of Scriptures / The How (Part 4)

- A.** In this series we have covered two aspects of the **Canonization of the Scriptures**.
1. In the first lesson we discussed the **“what”** of canonization of Scriptures.
    - a. It was noted that the canon of scriptures was the standard by which those who followed God lived.
    - b. When a writing was recognized as inspired it was immediately canonized or accepted as the standard by which God wanted them to live.
    - c. Thus man did not develop the canon, God did.
  2. In our second lesson we discussed **“why”** there was a need for man to put the canon into a collection of recognized and accepted inspired writings.
    - a. Since the books were prophetic they were valuable and it would be logical to preserve them.
    - b. The early church had need of knowing the complete standard by which they were to live.
    - c. There were false teachers declaring other doctrines and these needed to be silenced.
    - d. Missionary Stimulus, great commission
    - e. Because of persecution and politics there was a need to preserve the written word, lest it be lost or destroyed.

**B.** Having established these two points firmly we can now turn our attentions to the **“how”** of the canonization of Scriptures.

**C.** What we will be discussing in this lesson is how the canon was put together. The question most often asked concerning the canon is, **“how did those who were preserving the canon know which books to include and which to reject, since there were many writings that were being circulated as inspired?”**

1. The New Testament books were written during a half-century period by some eight or nine different writers, having destinations ranging from individuals (e.g., Philemon) to groups of churches (e.g., 1Peter) located in centers extending from Jerusalem to Rome.

Although the **“church”** did not give official recognition to the canon prior to the late fourth century, it is misleading to say there was no recognition before then.

2. Within the New Testament itself, there is evidence of **the concept of a developing canon** of inspired books. This may be observed in **the principle and process** of canonization in the New Testament.

3. *The principle of canonization:* The determining factor in the New Testament canonization was inspiration, and the primary test was apostolicity. If it could be determined that a book had apostolic authority, there would be no reason to question its authenticity or veracity.

In New Testament terminology, the church was “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets” (Eph. 2:20) whom Christ had promised to guide unto “all the truth” (John 16:13) by the Holy Spirit. The church in Jerusalem was said to have continued in the “apostles’ teachings” (Acts 2:42).

The term apostolic as used for the test of canonicity does not necessarily mean “apostolic authorship,” or that which was prepared under the direction of the apostles.

Apostolic authority, or apostolic approval, were the primary test of canonicity, and not merely apostolic authorship. In the terminology of the New Testament, a book had to be written by an apostle or prophet, Eph. 2:20. The real question, then, was, “Is a book prophetic?” that is, “Was it written by a prophet of God?”

The apostles were, of course, granted a prophetic ministry (John 14-16). Individuals in the New Testament besides those called apostles were granted a prophetic ministry, in accordance with the promise of the Holy Spirit, (1Cor. 12:29).

*The principle of canonization:* The determining factor in the New Testament canonization was inspiration,

4. *The process of canonization:* A close look at the New Testament reveals that these prophetic writings were being sorted from among the nonprophetic writings, even from oral traditions, and a canon was being formed during apostolic times. Several procedures were involved in this process. (Selecting, Reading, Circulating, Collecting, Quotation)

a. *Selecting procedure:* John implies that there was a selecting process going on among the apostles themselves, dealing with the problem of which particular truths should be preserved in written form, John 20:30, 21:25; Luke 1:1-4 This seems to indicate that there were other written records of Christ’s life that were not entirely true.

There are several references to the authority of apostolic oral tradition of teaching, (1Thess. 2:13; 1Cor. 11:2). These traditions meant that there was authoritative teaching by original eyewitnesses to Christ’s life.

b. *Reading procedure:* Another indication within the New Testament itself that a canon was being formed is the repeated injunction that certain books should be read in the churches. **1Thess. 5:27**

The key to canonicity implicit in those injunctions appears to be authority, or prophecy. If a writing was prophetic, it was read with authority to the churches.

c. *Circulating procedure:* Those writings that were read as authoritative to the churches were circulated and collected by the churches. The book of revelation was circulated among the churches of Asia Minor, **Rev. 1:11**.

Paul commanded the Colossians to pass his writings around, **Col. 4:16**. This is a crucial passage, because it indicates that the authority of one epistle included a larger audience than just the one to which it was written.

Thus other epistles were to be exchanged, and prophetic messages were to be read with all authority.

d. *Collecting procedure:* The circulating procedure no doubt led to the habit of collecting prophetic and apostolic writings, such as those alluded to in **2Peter 3:15-16**.

c. *Quotation procedure:* (**Jude 17,18 - 2Pet.3:2,3**) If Jude quoted Peter's writing when he said, "You must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v.17), then he not only verified that Peter's writing was accepted into the canon by that time, but that the books received were immediately and authoritatively quoted as Scripture.

Paul in **1Tim. 5:18** quoted from the gospel of **Luke 10:7**. It would be too much to expect that every book of the New Testament would be verified in this way, but enough of them referred to (at least some of Paul's, one of Luke's and perhaps one of Peter's - a substantial part of the New Testament) in order to demonstrate that there was a canon of New Testament books even during New Testament times.

##### 5. *The Apostolic fathers and the canon:*

a. Once we leave the first century what was said of the development of the New Testament canon, as seen in the inspired writings of the New Testament itself, is even more apparent in the writings of the younger contemporaries, the apostolic Fathers.

b. A sample survey will suffice to show that by the middle of the second century every book of the New Testament was referred to, as authoritative (canonical), by at least one of these Fathers.

c. One thing to consider about the mention of these New Testament books by the early church fathers. At the least this assures us of the knowledge and circulation of these books. At most, it assures us that those early Christians who quoted passages from these books believed them to be God's inspired word and thus canonical.

d. It must also be stated that just because an early writer did not quote every book does not mean that it was not in existence or he did not consider it to be canonical. All it proves is that he didn't quote from it.

c. (cf. attachments: Apostolic Fathers)

#### 6. Summary:

a. The primary test for canonicity in New Testament times was apostolic or prophetic authority. Those writings that came to local churches (or individuals) were read, circulated, collected, and even quoted as a part of the canon of the Scriptures. Those writings supplemented and formed an integral part of the inspired Word of God along with the previously recognized Old Testament Scriptures.

b. As we move past the first century we find that the early church Fathers were actively writing religious articles, sermons etc. and in these they quoted what is now known as the NT. This helps us understand how those who set out to put the canon into an organized form came to the conclusions that they did in regards to which books were considered canonical.

From what we have seen so far it is clear that the canon was actually completed when the last New Testament book was written.

Yet many look to the church councils of the Synod of Hippo, A.D. 393 and the council of Carthage A.D. 397 as the defining moments in the completion of the canon.

From this point on the 27 books of the New Testament have remained the same and have been accepted as canon.

This leaves us with one final question concerning the canon, "How do we know those books which were found to be canonical have retained their textual reliability?" This will be discussed in our next lesson.

## **The Canonization of Scriptures / Reliability (Part 5)**

**I.** In this series of lessons on the canon of Scripture we have attempted to determine whether we can place our trust in the Bible as God's inspired word.

**II.** In discussing this, we have considered such things as...

1. **The what of the canon;** explaining what the canon is.
2. **The why of the canon;** considering why the canon was put together in a organized manner.
3. **The how of the canon;** looking into how certain books were chosen over others as being canon.

**III.** As we come to the close of this study on the canon of Scriptures, we must consider one final facet concerning the assertion that the Bible is the word of God. That is, "**Can we be sure that the books of the Bible, as we have them today, are textually accurate?**"

**IV.** As stated in the past, although we can be sure that the books which were included in the canon were the ones God wanted in the canon, this does not answer the question of their textual reliability.

**V.** In this lesson we are not seeking to establish inspiration, but rather the historical reliability of the Scripture.

**VI.** C. Sanders in *Introduction to Research in English Literary History*, lists and explains the **three basic principles of historiography**. They are...

1. **The bibliographical test.**
2. **The internal evidence test.**
3. **The external evidence test.**

**VII.** We will be using this same criteria to determine the textual accuracy of the NT canon.

**1. *The bibliographical test of reliability:***

The bibliographical test of reliability of the New Testament, **is an examination of the textual transmission by which documents reach us. In other words, since we do not have the original documents, how reliable are the copies we have in regard to the number of manuscripts (MSS) and the time interval between the original and extant copy?**

Concerning this S.E. Peters points out 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.**"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Peters, S.E. *The Harvest of Hellenism*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971.

a. **Manuscript Evidence of the New Testament**

1). There are more than 5,300 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. Add over 10,000 Latin Vulgate and at least 9,300 other early versions (MSS) and we have more than 24,000 manuscript copies or portions of the New Testament in existence today.

2). No other document of antiquity even begins to approach such a number and attestation. In comparison, the *Iliad* by Homer is second with only 643 manuscripts that still survive. The first complete preserved text of Homer dates from the 13th century.

3). Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, who was the director and principal librarian of the British Museum and second to none in authority for issuing statements about MSS, says, "...besides number the manuscripts of the New Testament differ from those of the classical authors, and this time the difference is clear gain. 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. The books of the New Testament were written in the latter part of the first century; the earliest extant manuscripts (trifling scraps excepted) are of the fourth century - say 250-300 years later.

"This may sound a considerable interval, but it is nothing to that which parts most of the great classical authors from their earliest manuscripts. We believe that we have in all essentials an accurate text of the seven extant plays of Sophocles; yet the earliest substantial manuscript upon which it based was written more than 1400 years after the poet's death."

Kenyon continues in *The Bible and Archaeology*: "The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."

4). F.J. A. Hort rightfully adds 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."

5). J Harold Greenlee states, "... the number of available MSS of the New Testament is overwhelmingly greater than those of any other work of ancient literature. In the third place, the earliest extant MSS of the N.T. were written much closer to the date of the original writing than is the case in almost any other piece of ancient literature."

b. New Testament compared with other works of Antiquity (manuscript comparison)

1). F.F. Bruce in *The New Testament Documents* vividly pictures the comparison between the New Testament and ancient historical writings: Perhaps we can appreciate how wealthy the new Testament is in manuscript attestation if we compare the textual material for other ancient historical works. (See - **Comparison Chart**)

2). Greenlee writes in *Introduction to New Testament Textual Criticism* about the time gap between the original MS (the autograph) and the extant MS (the old copy surviving), saying that "the oldest known MSS of most of the Greek classical authors are dated a thousand years or more after the author's death. The time interval for the Latin authors is somewhat less, varying down to a minimum of three centuries in the case of Virgil. In the case of the N.T., however two of the most important MSS were written 300 years after the N.T. was completed, and some virtually complete N.T. books as well as extensive fragmentary MSS of many parts of the N.T. date back to one century from the original writings."

Greenlee adds that "since scholars accept as generally trustworthy the writings of the ancient classics even though the earliest MSS were written so long after the original writings and the number of extant MSS is in many instances so small, it is clear that the reliability of the text of the N.T. is likewise assured."

c. New Testament compared with other works of Antiquity (textual comparison)

1). Bruce Metzger observes: "of all the literary compositions by the Greek people, the Homeric poems are the best suited for comparison with the Bible." He adds: "In the entire range of ancient Greek and Latin literature, the *Iliad* ranks next to the New Testament in possessing the greatest amount of manuscript testimony."

E.G. Turner points out that Homer was no doubt the most widely read author in antiquity.

Work	when written	Earliest copy	Time span	# of copies
Homer ( <i>Iliad</i> )	900 b.c.	400 b.c.	500 years	643
New Testament	40-100 a.d.	125 a.d.	25 years	over 24,000

2). Geisler and Nix make a comparison of the textual variations between the NT documents and ancient works: “Next to the New Testament, there are more extant manuscripts of the *Iliad* (643) than any other book. Both it and the Bible were considered ‘sacred,’ and both underwent textual changes and criticism of their Greek manuscripts. The New Testament has about 20,000 lines.”

They continue by saying that “the *Iliad* [has] about 15,600 lines. Only 40 lines (or 400 words) of the New Testament are in doubt whereas 764 lines of the *Iliad* are questioned. This five percent textual corruption compares with one-half of one percent of similar emendations in the New Testament.

3). Warfield boldly declares that the facts show that the great majority of the New Testament “has been transmitted to us with no, or next to no, variation; and even in the most corrupt form in which it has ever appeared, to use the oft-quoted words of Richard Bentley, ‘the real text of the sacred writers is competently exact; ...nor is one article of faith or moral precept either perverted or lost...choose as awkwardly as you will, choose the worst design, out of the whole lump of readings.’”

He goes on to say: “If we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must...declare it to be marvelously correct. Such has been the care with which the New Testament has been copied - a care which has doubtless grown out of the true reverence for its holy words - such has been the providence of God in preserving for His church in each and every age a competently exact text of the Scriptures, that not only is the New Testament unrivaled among ancient writings in the purity of its text as actually transmitted and kept in use, but also in the abundance of testimony which has come down to us for castigating its comparatively infrequent blemishes.”

4). The editors of the Revised Standard version say: “It will be obvious to the careful reader that still in 1946, as in 1881 and in 1901, no doctrine of the Christian faith has been affected by the revision, for the simple reason that, out of the thousands of variant readings in the manuscripts, none has turned up thus far that requires a revision of Christian doctrine.

5). Millar Burrows says: I believe one can logically conclude from the perspective of literary evidence that the New Testament's reliability is far greater than any other record of antiquity."

6). Fredric G. Kenyon continues in *The Story of the Bible*: "It is reassuring at the end to find that the general result of all of these discoveries (of manuscripts) and all this study is to strengthen the proof of the authenticity of the Scriptures, and our conviction that we have in our hands, in substantial integrity, the veritable Word of God."

d. *Chronology of Important New Testament Manuscripts*

1). In dating the manuscripts several factors were considered.

1. Materials
2. Letter size and form
3. Punctuation
4. Text divisions
5. Ornamentation
6. The color of the ink
7. The texture and color of the parchment

2). *John Rylands' MS (130 A.D.)* is located in The John Rylands Library of Manchester, England (oldest extant fragment of the New Testament). "Because of its early date and location (Egypt), some distance from the traditional place of composition (Asia Minor), this portion of the Gospel of John tends to confirm the traditional date of the composition of the Gospel about the end of the 1st century."

3). *Bodmer Papyrus II (150-200 A.D.)* is located in the Bodmer Library of World Literature and contains most of John. Bruce Metzger says that this MS was "the most important discovery of the N.T. manuscripts since the purchase of the Chester Beatty papyri..."

4). *Chester Beatty Papyri (200 A.D.)* is located in C. Beatty Museum in Dublin and part is owned by the University of Michigan. This collection contains papyrus codices, three of them containing major portions of the New Testament.

In *The Bible and Modern Scholarship*, Sir Frederic Kenyon says, "The net result of this discovery - by far the most important since the discovery of the Sinaiticus - is, in fact, to reduce the gap between the earlier manuscripts and the traditional dates of the New Testament books so far that it becomes negligible in any discussion of their authenticity.

No other ancient book has anything like such early and plentiful testimony to its text, and no unbiased scholar would deny that the text that has come down to us is substantially sound.

5). *Diatessaron*: meaning “a harmony of four parts.” The Greek *dia Tessaron* literally means “through four.” This was a harmony of the Gospels done by Tatian (about 160 A.D.)

*Eusebius* in *Ecclesiastical History*, IV, 29 Loeb ed., 1, 397, wrote: “...Their former leader Tatian composed in some way a combination and collection of the Gospels, and gave this the name of *THE DIATESSARON*, and this is still extant in some places...” It is believed that Tatian, an Assyrian Christian, was first to compose a harmony of the Gospels; only a small portion is extant today.

6). *Codex Vaticanus* (325-350 A.D.) located in the Vatican Library, contains nearly all of the Bible.

7). *Codex Sinaiticus* (350 A.D.) is located in the British Museum. This MS, which contains almost all the New Testament and over half of the Old Testament, was discovered by Dr. Constantin Von Tischendorf in the mount Sinai Monastery in 1859, presented by the Monastery to the Russian Czar and bought by the British Government and people from the Soviet Union for 100,000 pounds on Christmas Day, 1933.

8). *Codex Ephraemi* (400 A.D.) is located in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris. The Encyclopedia Britannica believes it was written in the Greek in Egypt. It contains almost the entire Bible.

Every book is represented in the MS except II Thessalonians and II John.

9). *Codex Bezae* (450 A.D. plus) is located in the Cambridge Library and contains the Gospels and Acts not only in Greek but also in Latin.

10). *Codex Washingtonensis* (or *Freericanus*) (ca 450) contains the four Gospels.

11). *Codex Claromontanus* (500's A.D.) contains the Pauline Epistles. It is a bilingual MS.

e. **Manuscript reliability supported by various versions**

1). Another strong support for textual evidence and accuracy is the ancient versions. For the most part, “ancient literature was rarely translated into another language.”

Christianity from its inception has been a missionary faith.

“The earliest versions of the New Testament were prepared by missionaries to assist in the propagation of the Christian faith among peoples whose native tongue was **Syriac, Latin, or Coptic.**”

Syriac and Latin versions (translations) of the New Testament were made around 150 A.D. This brings us back very near to the time of the originals.

2). There are more than 15,000 existing copies of various versions.

3). **Syriac Versions**

a). *Old Syriac Version* contains four Gospels, copied about the fourth century. It needs to be explained that “Syriac is the name generally given to Christian Aramaic. It’s written in a distinctive variation of the Aramaic alphabet.”

Theodore of Mopsuestia (fifth century) wrote, “It has been translated into the tongue of the Syrians.”

b). *Syriac Peshitta*. The basic meaning is “simple.” It was the standard version, produced around 150-250 A.D. There are more than 350 extant MSS today from the 400’s

c). *Palestinian Syriac*. Most scholars date this version at about 400-500 A.D. (fifth century).

d). *Philoxenian (508) A.D.* Polycarp translated a new Syriac New Testament for the Philoxenas, bishop of Mabug.

e). *Harkleian Syriac*. 616 A.D. by Thomas of Harkel.

4). **Latin Versions**

a). *Old Latin*. There are testimonies from the fourth century to the thirteenth century that in the third century an “old Latin version circulated in North Africa and Europe...”

- b). *African Old Latin (Codex Babbienensis) 400 A.D.* Metzger says that “E.A. Lowe shows palaeographical marks of it having been copied from a second century papyrus”
  - c). *Codex Corbiensis (400-500 A.D.)* contains the four Gospels.
  - d). *Codex Vercellensis (360 A.D.)*
  - e). *Codex Palatinus (fifth century A.D.)*
  - f). *Latin Vulgate* (meaning “common or popular”). Jerome was the secretary of Damasus, who was the Bishop of Rome. Jerome accomplished the bishop’s request for a version between 366-384.
- 5). **Coptic (or Egyptian) version**
- a). F.F. Bruce writes that it is probable that the first Egyptian version was translated in the third or fourth century.
  - b). *Sahidic*. Beginning of the third century
  - c). *Bohairic*. The editor, Rodalphe Kasser, dates it about the fourth century.
  - d). *Middle Egyptian*. Fourth or fifth century
- 6). **Other early versions**
- a). *Armenian (400 + A.D.)*. Seems to have been translated from a Greek Bible obtained from Constantinople.
  - b). *Gothic*. Fourth century
  - c). *Georgian*. Fifth century
  - d). *Ethiopic*. Sixth century
  - e). *Nubian*. Sixth century
- f. **Manuscript reliability supported by early church fathers.**
- 1). *The Encyclopedia Britannica* says: “When the textual scholar has examined the manuscripts and the versions, he still has not exhausted the evidence for the New Testament text. The writings of the early Christian fathers often reflect a form of text differing from that in one or another

manuscript...their witness to the text, especially as it corroborates the readings that come from other sources, belongs to the testimony that textual critics must consult before forming their conclusions.

2). *Sir David Dalrymple* was wondering about the preponderance of Scripture in early writing when someone asked him, “Suppose that the New Testament had been destroyed, and every copy of it lost by the end of the third century, could it have been collected together again from the writings of the Fathers of the second and third centuries?”

After a great deal of investigation Dalrymple concluded: “Look at those books. You remember the question about the New Testament and the Fathers? That question roused my curiosity, and as I possessed all the existing works of the fathers of the second and third centuries, I commenced to search, and up to this time I have found the entire New Testament, except eleven verses.

3). *Clement of Rome (A.D. 95)* Origen (A.D. 185-253) in *De Principis*, Book II, Chapter 3, calls him a disciple of the Apostles.

Tertullian in *Against Heresies*, Chapter 23, writes that he [Clement] was appointed by Peter.

Irenaeus continues in *Against Heresies*, Book III, Chapter 3, that he [Clement] “had the preaching of the Apostles still echoing in his ears and their doctrine in front of his eyes.”

Clement quotes from: *Matthew, Mark, Luke, Acts, 1Corinthians, 1Peter, Hebrews, Titus*

4). *Ignatius (A.D. 70-110)*, was the Bishop of Antioch and was martyred. He knew well the Apostles. His seven epistles contain quotations from: *Matthew, John, Acts, Roman's, 1Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippian's, Galatians, Colossians, James, 1&2 Thessalonians, 1&2 Timothy, 1Peter.*

5). *Polycarp (A.D. 70-156)*, martyred at 86 years of age, was Bishop of Smyrna and a disciple of the apostle John.

Among others who quoted from the New Testament were Barnabas (ca A.D. 70), Hermas (ca A.D. 95), Tatian (ca A.D. 170), and Irenaeus (ca A.D. 170).

6). *Clement of Alexandria* (A.D 150-212). 2,400 of his quotes are from all but three books of the New Testament.

7). *Tertullian* (A.D. 160-220) was a presbyter of the church of Carthage and quotes the New Testament more than 7,000 times, of which 3,800 are from the gospels.

8). *Hippolytus* (A.D. 170-235) has more than 1,300 references.

9). *Origen* (A.D. 185-253) This vociferous writer compiled more than 6,000 works. He lists more than 18,000 New Testament quotes.

10). *Cyprian* (died A.D. 258) was bishop of Carthage. Uses approximately 740 Old Testament citations and 1,030 from the New Testament.

*Geisler and Nix* rightly conclude that “a brief inventory at this point will reveal that there were some 32,000 citations of the New Testament prior to the time of the Council of Nicea (325). These 32,000 quotations are by no means exhaustive, and they do not even include the fourth century writers. Just adding the number of references used by one other writer, Eusebius, who flourished prior to the contemporary with the Council at Nicea will bring the total citations of the New Testament to over 36,000.

*Leo Jaganay*, writing of the patristic quotations of the New Testament, writes: “Of the considerable volumes of unpublished material that Dean Burgon left when he died, of special note is his index of New Testament citations by the church fathers of antiquity. It consists of sixteen thick volumes to be found in the British Museum, and contains 86,489 quotations.”

## 2. *The internal evidence test of reliability:*

### a. *Benefit of the doubt*

1). On this test 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.”

Therefore, “one must listen to the claims of the document under analysis, and not assume fraud or error unless the author disqualified himself by contradictions or known factual inaccuracies.”

2). Robert Horn amplifies this, saying: “Think for a moment about what needs to be demonstrated concerning a “difficulty” in order to transfer it

into the category of a valid argument against doctrine. Certainly much more is required than the mere appearance of a contradiction. First, we must be certain that we have correctly understood the passage, the sense in which it uses words or numbers. Second, that we possess all available knowledge in this matter. Third, that no further light can possibly be thrown on it by advancing knowledge, textual research, archaeology, etc.

*“...Difficulties do not constitute objections,”* adds Horn. *“Unsolved problems are not of necessity errors.* This is not to minimize the area of difficulty; it is to see it in perspective. Difficulties are to be grappled with and problems are to drive us to seek clearer light; *but until such a time as we have total and final light on any issue we are in no position to affirm, ‘Here is a proven error, an unquestionable objection to an infallible Bible.’ It is common knowledge that countless ‘objections’ have been fully resolved since this century began.”*

b. **Primary source value:** They wrote as eyewitnesses or from first hand information:

1). Luke 1:1-3

2). 2Peter 1:16

3). 1John 1:3

4). Acts 2:22

5). John 19:35

6). Luke 3:1

7). Acts 26:24-26

8). *F.F. Bruce*, the 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 ... firsthand testimony, and appealed to it time and again. ‘We are witnesses of these things,’ was their constant and confident assertion. And it can have been by no means so easy as some writers seem to think to invent words and deeds of Jesus in those early years, when so many of His disciples were about, who could remember what had and had not happened.*

“And it was not only friendly eyewitnesses that the early preachers had to reckon with; there were others less well disposed who were also conversant with the main facts of the ministry and death of Jesus. The disciples could not afford to risk inaccuracies (not to speak of willful manipulation of the facts), which would at once be exposed by those who would be only too glad to do so. On the contrary, one of the strong points in the original apostolic preaching is the confident appeals to the knowledge of the hearers; they not only said, ‘We are witnesses of these things,’ but also, “as you yourselves also know’ (Acts 2:22). Had there been any tendency to depart from the facts in any material respect, the possible presence of hostile witnesses in the audience would have served as a further corrective.”

3. *The external evidence test of reliability:*

a. *Substantiating Authenticity:*

1). Do other historical materials confirm or deny the internal testimony provided by the documents themselves?”

2). In other words, what sources are there apart from the literature under analysis that substantiate its accuracy, reliability and authenticity?

b. *Supporting evidence of extra-biblical authors.*

1). *Eusebius*, in his *Ecclesiastical History III.39*, preserves writings of Papias, the bishop of Heirapolis (130 A.D.) which Papias got from the Elder (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 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 thing, not to omit anything that he had heard, not to include any false statement among them.”

2). *Papias* also comments about the Gospel of Matthew: “Matthew recorded the oracles in the Hebrew (i.e., Aramaic) tongue.”

3). *Irenaeus*, Bishop of Lyons (A.D. 180), who was a student of Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna; martyred in 156 A.D., had been a Christian

for 86 years, and was a disciple of John the Apostle. He wrote:

“So firm is the ground upon which these Gospels rest, that the very heretics themselves bear witness to them, and, starting from these [documents], each one of them endeavors to establish his own particular doctrine” (Against Heresies III).

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

“For as there are four quarters of the world in which we live, and four universal winds, and as the Church is dispersed over all the earth, and the gospel is the pillar and base of the church and the breath of life, so it is natural that it should have four pillars, breathing immortality from every quarter and kindling the life of men anew. Whence it is manifest that the Word, the architect of all things, who sits upon the cherubim and holds all things together, having been manifested to men, has given us the gospel in fourfold form, but held together by one Spirit.”

#### 4). *Flavius Josephus* - Jewish Historian

The difference between Josephus’ account of the baptism of John the Baptist and that of the Gospel is that Josephus says that John’s baptism was not for the remission of sin, while the Bible (Mark 1:4) says it was; and that John was killed for political reasons and not for his denunciation of Herod’s marriage to Herodias. As Bruce points out, it is quite possible that Herod believed he could kill two birds with one stone by imprisoning John. In regard to the discrepancy over his baptism, Bruce says that the Gospels give more probable account from the “religious-historical” point of view and that they are older than Josephus’ work and, therefore, more accurate. However, the real point is that the general outline of Josephus’ account confirms that of the Gospels.

In Ant. XVIII. 5.2, Josephus makes mention of John the Baptist. Because of the manner in which the passage is written, there is no ground for suspecting Christian interpolation. In this passage we read:

“Now some of the Jews thought that Herod’s army had been destroyed by God, and that it was a very just penalty to avenge John, surnamed the Baptist. For Herod had killed him, though he was a good man, who bade the Jews practice virtue, be just one to another and pious toward God,

and come together in baptism. He taught that baptism was acceptable to God provided that they underwent it not to procure remission of certain sins, but for the purification of the body, if the soul had already been purified by righteousness. And when the others gathered round him (for they were greatly moved when they heard his words), Herod feared that his persuasive power over men, being so great, might lead to a rising, as they seemed ready to follow his counsel in everything. So he thought it much better to seize him and kill him before he caused any tumult, than to have to repent of falling into such trouble later on, after a revolt had taken place. Because of the suspicion of Herod, John was sent in chains to Machaerus, the fortress which we mentioned above, and there put to death. The Jews believed that it was to avenge him that the disaster fell upon the army, God wishing to bring evil upon Herod.”

**Conclusion:**

From what we have seen all three principles of Historiography

The Bibliographical Test

The Internal Evidence Test

The External Evidence Test

Do not cause any concern for the Bible student.

Each time the Bible is put through these test they pass. This being the case the reliability of the text is assured.

## **The Canonization of Scriptures** (Reliability Through Archaeology)

I. Another means of determining the reliability of the Canon is to consider its content in relation to archaeology.

II. If we are to believe that the Bible is reliable, all historical content must be reliable.

III. If the historical content is unreliable I would have good reason to question the reliability of the entire text.

IV. Let's consider these evidences for the reliability of the **Biblical text from Archaeology**.

### *1. Initial comments from Archaeologist*

A. *Nelson Glueck*, the renowned Jewish archaeologist, wrote: "It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference." He continued his assertion of "the almost incredibly accurate historical memory of the Bible, and particularly so when it is fortified by archaeological fact.

B. *William F Albright*, known for his reputation as one of the great archaeologist, states: "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition."

Albright adds: "The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, certain phases of which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the bible as a source of history."

C. *Professor H.H. Rowley* (cited by Donald F. Wiseman in *Revelation and the Bible*) claims that "it is not because scholars of today begin with more conservative presuppositions than their predecessors that they have a much greater respect for the Patriarchal stories than was formerly common, but because the evidence warrants it."

D. *Merrill Unger* states: "The role which archaeology is performing in New Testament research (as well as that of the Old Testament) in expediting scientific study, balancing critical theory, illustrating, elucidating, supplementing and authenticating historical and cultural backgrounds, constitutes the one bright spot in the future of criticism of the Sacred text."

E. *F.F. Bruce* notes: "Where Luke has been suspected of inaccuracy, and accuracy has been vindicated by some inscriptional evidence, it may be legitimate to say that archaeology has confirmed the New Testament record."

Bruce adds that “for the most part the service which archaeology has rendered to the New Testament studies is the filling in of the contemporary background, against which we can read the record with enhanced comprehension and appreciation. And this background is a first-century background. The New Testament narrative just will not fit into a second century background.

G. Millar Burrows summarizes: “On the whole such evidence as archaeology has afforded thus far, especially by providing additional and older manuscripts of the books of the Bible, strengthens our confidence in the accuracy with which the text has been transmitted through the centuries.”

H. Sir Frederic Kenyon says: Archaeology has not yet said its last word; but the results already achieved confirm what faith would suggest, that the Bible can do nothing but gain from an increase of knowledge.”

He adds “Archaeology has produced an abundance of evidence to substantiate the correctness of our Massoretic text.”

I. William Albright writes concerning the accuracy of the Scriptures as the result of archaeology:

“The contents of our Pentateuch are, in general, very much older than the date at which they were finally edited; new discoveries continue to confirm the historical accuracy or the literary antiquity of detail after detail in it .... It is, accordingly, sheer hypercriticism to deny the substantially Mosaic character of the Pentateuchal tradition.”

## *2. Old Testament Examples of Archaeological Confirmation*

### *A. Elba Kingdom:*

An archaeological find that relates to biblical criticism is the recently discovered Ebla tablets. The discovery was made in northern Syria by two professors from the University of Rome, Dr. Paolo Matthiae, an archaeologist; and Dr. Giovanni Petinato, an epigrapher. The excavation of the site, Tell Mardikh, began in 1964, in 1968 they uncovered a statue of King Ibbit-Lim. The inscription made reference to Ishtar, the goddess who “shines brightly in Ebla.” Ebla, at its height of power in 2300 B.C., had a population of 260,000 people.

It was destroyed in 2250 B.C. by Naram-Sin, grandson of Sargan the Great.

Since 1974 17,000 tablets have been unearthed from the era of the Ebla Kingdom.

An example of the contribution of the Ebla discovery is in relation to Genesis 14, which for years has been considered to be historically unreliable. The victory of

Abraham over Chedorlaomer and the Mesopotamian kings has been described as fictitious and the five cities of the Plain (Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboiim and Zoar) as legendary.

Yet the Ebla archives refer to all five Cities of the Plain and on one tablet the Cities are listed in the exact same sequence as Genesis 14. The milieu of the tablets reflect the culture of the patriarchal period and depict that, before the catastrophe recorded in Genesis 14, the area was a flourishing region experiencing prosperity and success, as recorded in Genesis.

B. During the excavations of **Jericho (1930-1936)** Garstang found something so startling that a statement of what was found was prepared and signed by himself and two other members of the team. In reference to these findings Garstang says: **“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 the ruins into the city.”** Why so unusual? Because the walls of cities do not fall outwards, they fall inwards. And yet in Joshua 6:20 we read “...The wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city every man straight ahead, and they took the city.” The walls were made to fall outward.

C. **Julius Wellhausen**, a well-known biblical critic of the 29th century, felt that the record of the laver made of brass mirrors was not an original entry into the Priestly Code. By stating so he puts the record of the tabernacle much too late for the time of Moses. However, there is no valid reason for employing the late dating (500 B.C.) of Wellhausen. There is specific archaeological evidence of such bronze mirrors in what is known as the Empire Period of Egypt's history (1500-1400 B.C.). Thus, we see that this period is contemporary with Moses and the Exodus (1500-1400 B.C.)

D. **Henry M Morris** observes: **“Problems still exist, of course, in the complete harmonization of archaeological material with the Bible, but none so serious as not to bear real promise of imminent solution through further investigation. It must be extremely significant that, in view of the great mass of corroborative evidence regarding the Biblical history of these periods, there exists today not one unquestionable find of archaeology that proves the Bible to be in error at any point.”**

### *3. New Testament Examples of Archaeological Confirmation*

A. Luke's reliability as an historian is unquestionable. Unger tells us that archaeology has authenticated the Gospel accounts, especially Luke. In Unger's words, **“The Acts of the Apostles is now generally agreed in scholarly circles to be the work of Luke, to belong to the first century and to involve the labors of a careful historian who was substantially accurate in his use of sources.”**

B. Sir William Ramsay is regarded as one of the greatest archaeologists ever to have lived. Concerning Luke's ability as a historian, Ramsay concluded after 30 years of study that "Luke is a historian of the first rank; not merely are his statements of fact trustworthy...this author should be placed along with the very greatest of historians.

Ramsay adds: "Luke's history is unsurpassed in respect of its trustworthiness."

What Ramsay had done conclusively and finally was to exclude certain possibilities. As seen in the light of archaeological evidence, the New Testament reflects the conditions of the second half of the first century A.D., and does not reflect the conditions of any later date. Historically it is of the greatest importance that this should have been so effectively established. In all matters of external fact the author of Acts is seen to have been minutely careful and accurate as only a contemporary can be.

C. It was at one time conceded that Luke had entirely missed the boat in the events he portrayed as surrounding the birth of Jesus (Luke 2:1-3). Critics argued that there was no census, that Quirinius was not governor of Syria at the time and that everyone did not have to return to his ancestral home.

First of all, archaeological discoveries show that the Romans had a regular enrollment of taxpayers and also held censuses every 14 years. This procedure was indeed begun under Augustus and the first took place in either 23-22 B.C. or in 9-8 B.C. The latter would be the one which Luke refers.

Second, we find evidence that Quirinius was governor of Syria around 7 B.C. This assumption is based on an inscription found in Antioch ascribing to Quirinius this post. As a result of this finding, it is now supposed that he was governor twice - once in 7 B.C. and the other time in 6 A.D. (the date ascribed by Josephus).

Last, in regard to the practices of enrollment, a papyrus found in Egypt gives directions for the conduct of a census.

It reads: "Because of the approaching census it is necessary that all those residing for any cause away from their homes should at once prepare to return to their own governments in order that they may complete the family registration of the enrollment and that the tilled lands may retain those belonging to them."

D. Luke writes of the riot of Ephesus and represents a civic assembly (Ecclesia) taking place in a theater (Acts 19:23ff). The facts are that it did meet there as borne out by an inscription which speaks of silver statues of Artemis (Diana in KJV) to be placed in the "theater during a full season of the Ecclesia." The theater, when excavated, proved to have room for 25,000 people.

E. *The Pavement*. For centuries there has been no record of the court where Jesus was tried by Pilate (named Gabbatha or the Pavement, John 19:13)

*William F Albright* in the *Archaeology of Palestine* shows that this court was the court of the Tower of Antonia, which was the Roman military headquarters in Jerusalem. It was left buried when the city was rebuilt in the time of Hadrian and not discovered until recently.

F. *The Pool of Bethesda*, another site with no record of it except in the New Testament, can now be identified “with a fair measure of certainty in the northeast quarter of the old city (the area called Bezetha, or ‘New Lawn’) in the first century A.D., where traces of it were discovered in the course of excavations near the Church of St. Anne in 1888.”

## **Conclusion**

After trying to shatter the historicity and validity of the scripture, I came to the conclusion that it is historically trustworthy, states Josh McDowell. If one discards the Bible as being unreliable, then he must discard almost all literature of antiquity.

One problem I constantly face is the desire on the part of many to apply one standard or test to secular literature and another to the Bible. One needs to apply the same test, whether the literature under investigation is secular or religious.

Having done this, I believe one can hold the Scriptures in his hand and say, “*The Bible is trustworthy and historically reliable.*”

## Manuscript Transmission, Preparation, and Preservation

(Lesson 7)

I. It is important, in determining the reliability of the Biblical text, to consider how it has been preserved through the ages.

II. A corrupt text is an unreliable text and an unreliable text is an unbelievable text.

III. In studying the transmission, preparation and preservation of the Biblical text we can have great confidence in it being the revelation of God's will to man.

### 1. *The Process of Transmission*<sup>1</sup>

#### A. Genuineness and Authenticity Distinguished

1. To begin, there is some confusion about the meaning of these terms, as their usage is somewhat interchangeable in theological circles.

2. **Genuineness.** As used here, genuineness refers to the truth of the origin of a document, that is, its authorship. It answers the question, Is this document really from its alleged source or author? Is it genuinely the work of the stated writer? Genuineness deals with such things as the authorship, date, and destiny of the biblical books.

3. **Authenticity.** This refers to the truth of the facts and content of the documents of the Bible. Authenticity deals with the integrity (trustworthiness) and credibility (truthfulness) of the record.

4. A book may be genuine without being authentic, if the professed writer is the real one, even if the content is untrue. Then, again, a book may be authentic without being genuine, if the content is true but the professed writer is not the actual one. In such a case, the book would be called forged or spurious, regardless of the truthfulness or falsity of its content.

5. Biblical books of course must be both genuine and authentic or they cannot be inspired, because in either case there would be a falsehood.

6. It is assumed that a biblical book, which has divine authority, and hence credibility, and has been transmitted with integrity, will automatically have genuineness. If there be a lie in the book regarding its origin and / or authorship, how can its content be believed? This is why studying the transmission of the text is so important. It helps us establish both its credibility and authority.

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<sup>1</sup> Following notes from: *A General Introduction to The Bible*, Norman L. Geisler, William E. Nix, Moody Press, 1986

## B. Guarantee of Authenticity (and Genuineness)

1. The whole chain of revelation must be examined in order to demonstrate with certainty that the fact and route of revelation are found in the history of the Bible known to Christians today.

2. A complete chain “from God to us” will consist of the following necessary “links.”

a. *Deity*. This is the first link in the chain of revelation. The existence of a God who desires to communicate Himself to man is the one irreducible axiom of this entire study. If not already established, evidence that there is such a God is assumed for this discussion.

b. *Apostolicity*. The fact that God accredited and directed a group of men known as prophets and apostles to speak authoritatively for Him is to be the repeated claim of the biblical writers. We would not consider the Bible's author to be God if the claim is never made.)

c. *Canonicity*. A somewhat parenthetical but necessary link is canonicity. It answers the historical question, Which are the inspired prophetic and apostolic books and how are they known? They are those books that were written by men of God, confirmed by acts of God, that came with the authority and power of God, that told the truth about God, man, and so on, and that were accepted and collected by the people of God.

d. *Authority*. The direct result of Apostolicity is authority, as circumscribed by the limits of canonicity. The teaching of men who were divinely accredited for that purpose is divinely authoritative teaching. In that sense, authority is just a logical link, consequent upon Apostolicity as Apostolicity is, in turn, dependent upon deity, or, rather, upon God's desire to communicate to men.

e. *Authenticity*. Likewise, authenticity is the necessary result of authority, which is derived from Apostolicity, deity, and so on. Whatever is spoken of God must be true, because God is the very standard of truth itself (cf. Heb. 6:18). The Scriptures are authentic (true in content) if they are the prophetic voice of God.

f. *Integrity*. This is the historic evidence that links authenticity and credibility. Anything authentic or true is of course credible. The question is, Does the twentieth-century Bible possess integrity?

To put it another way, Does it adequately and accurately reproduce the original apostolic writings known as the autographs?

1. *Autographs.* The authentic apostolic writings produced under the direction and/or authorization of a prophet or apostle are the autographs.

- a. An autograph would not necessarily have to be written by an apostle's own hand. (cf. Rom. 16:22, Jer. 36:27).
- b. The autograph does not necessarily have to be the "first edition" of a book. (Jer. 36:28)

2. *Ancient Versions.* The autographs are not extant. So they must be reconstructed from early manuscripts and versions. The earliest Old Testament translation into Greek is the Septuagint (LXX) begun in Alexandria, Egypt, during the third century B.C. The earliest versions, or translations of the New Testament into other languages, for example, the Syriac and Latin, extend back to the threshold of the second century. They began to appear just over a generation from the time the New Testament was completed.

3. *Citations of the Fathers.* The corroborative quotations of the church fathers from the first few centuries, totaling over 36,000, include almost every verse in the New Testament. Some of these citations begin in the first century, and they continue in an unbroken succession from that time.

4. *Manuscript copies.* These were in Greek and extended practically to the first century in fragmentary form and to the third and fourth century in completed copies. The earliest manuscripts, known as uncials, were written in capital letters throughout. Later manuscripts, known as minuscules, were written in lower case letters or on flowing letters, cursives. Some manuscripts were written on scrolls and others as books, codex form, from which they are known as codices.

5. *Modern Versions.* The ancient manuscripts are the most important witnesses to the autographs and, by the method of textual criticism, they form the basis for the modern versions of the Bible. Some early modern versions were based on medieval versions; however, since the discoveries of the great manuscripts of the New Testament and other miscellaneous items, most recent versions and translations are based on the latter. These discoveries form the basis of the critical Greek text rather than the so-called

Received Text used as the authority of the earlier modern versions. In the minds of most modern textual scholars, that so-called “critical” text represents an objective attempt to reconstruct the autographs. It is a scientific approach to the question of integrity, and it concludes that the present Greek text is probably over 99 percent accurate in reproducing the exact words of the autographs.

g. *Credibility*. The right to be believed - credibility - is based on the authenticity of the text. This, in turn, is founded upon divine authority, which is guaranteed by the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the integrity of the text.

1. *Objective Credibility*. This is based on (1) the integrity of the text via the science of textual criticism, which yields a Bible that is probably over 99 percent trustworthy, or credible. (2) There is the objective evidence supplied by apologetics, which likewise confirms the Bible to be the Word of God, prima facie evidence, transforming ability, unity, historicity, sciences, prophecy, influence, indestructibility, and recorded miracles (3) The providence of God as the witness of the Holy Spirit provide assurance to the believer that the chain is unbroken. They are “welds” for what may seem to be “cracks” in the chain for critics who stress the weakness of the link of integrity that is “probably” some “99 percent” sure, and not actually a full “100 percent” certain.

2. *Subjective assurance*. Before discussing the subjective assurance that welds together any potential cracks in the chain of the Bible’s transmission, it should be emphasized that a 99 percent probability is as good as can be obtained by the historical method. Similar textual methods applied to other ancient documents yield a much lower percent of certitude. (1) In fact, human beings do not require any more assurance for credibility. The game of life is played, and must be, quite often on much lower odds. (2) The providence of God, a characteristic that is consonant with a self-revealing God, is the force that welds together the entire chain of communication. (3) Finally, there is, transcending the entire chain, the verification of the children of God by the Spirit of God that the Bible is the Word of God. The Spirit of God speaks through the Word of God, and the Word of God has been transmitted by a historical process superintended by the providence of God. That truth is based upon the best objective evidence and provides the best subjective certitude.

## 2. *The Preparation, Age, and Preservation of Manuscript Copies*

Another factor that enhances confidence in the fidelity of the transmitted text is derived from a consideration of the copying and subsequent care of manuscripts.

### A. *The Preparation of Manuscripts:*

1. *The Old Testament.* Although it is impossible to fix with certainty the beginning of Hebrew writing, it was pre-Mosaic. Thus, from an early date the Scriptures were copied. These copies were made according to different criteria, depending on the purpose of the manuscript being copied. There are no manuscripts in existence dating before the Babylonian captivity (586 B.C), but there was a great flood of copies of the Scriptures dating from the Talmudic period (c. 300 B.C. - A.D. 500). During that period there were two general classes of manuscript copies.

a. *The synagogue rolls* were regarded as “sacred copies” of the Old Testament text and were used in public meeting places. Separate rolls contained the Torah (Law) on one roll, portions of the Nevi'im (Prophets) on another, the Kethuvim (Writings) on two others, and Megilloth (“five rolls”) on five separate rolls. The Megilloth were no doubt produced on separate rolls to facilitate their being read at the annual feasts. Strict rules were employed so these rolls would be copied scrupulously. Samuel Davidson related these rules rather meticulously when he wrote,

[1] A synagogue roll must be written on the skins of clean animals, [2] prepared for the particular use of the synagogue by a Jew. [3] These must be fastened together with strings taken from clean animals. [4] Every skin must contain a certain number of columns, equal throughout the entire codex. [5] The length of each column must not extend over less than 48 nor more than 60 lines; and the breadth must consist of thirty letters. [6] The whole copy must be first-lined; and if three words should be written without a line, it is worthless. [7] The ink should be black, neither red, green, nor any other color, and be prepared according to a definite recipe. [8] An authentic copy must be the exemplar, from which the transcriber ought not in the least deviate. [9] No word or letter, not even a *yod*, must be written from memory, the scribe not having looked at the codex before him.... [10] Between every consonant the space of a hair or thread must intervene; [11] between every new parashah, or section, the breadth of nine consonants; [12] between every book, three lines. [13] The fifth book of Moses must terminate exactly with a line; but the rest need not do so. [14] Besides this, the copyist must sit in full Jewish dress, [15] wash his whole body, [16] not begin to write the name of God with

a pen newly dipped in ink, [17] and should a king address him while writing that name he must take no notice of him.<sup>2</sup>

b. *The private copies* were regarded as “common copies” of the Old Testament text and were not used in public meetings. These rolls, although not governed by such strict rules as the synagogue rolls, were prepared with great care. They were frequently ornamented, often took a codex form, sometimes included marginal notes and commentaries. Because they were private copies, the desires of the purchaser were paramount in choosing such things as size, material, form, and ink color. Seldom did an individual have a collection of scrolls that contained the entire Old Testament.

2. *The New Testament.* Although the autographs of the New Testament have long since disappeared, there is enough evidence to warrant the statement that those documents were written in rolls and books made of papyrus. The Old Testament had been copied into the “books and the parchments,” but the New Testament was probably written on Papyrus<sup>3</sup> between about A.D. 50 and 100. During this period, papyrus rolls were used, and papyrus survived long periods of time only when placed in rather unusual circumstances. By the early second century, codices were introduced but they were still generally made of papyrus. As a by-product of the persecutions, culminating with the Edict of Diocletian in 302/3, the Scriptures were jeopardized and not systematically copied. It was with the Letter of Constantine to Eusebius that systematic copying of the New Testament began in the West. From that time, vellum and parchment were used along with papyrus. It was not until the reformation era that printed copies of the Bible became available.

B. *The Age of Manuscripts:* Because there was no printing process available at the time of the manuscript copying of the Scriptures, the age of manuscripts must be determined by other means than a publisher’s date. The process of dating is not nearly so accurate as finding the publication date printed on the title page of a modern book, but it is relatively accurate.

1. *Materials:* The materials of a given manuscript copy may provide the basis for discovering its date. We will be discussing only those materials that could be utilized in making rolls and/or books.

a. *Skins* were possibly the earliest materials used, and they were at first of coarse texture and made rather heavy, bulky rolls. These materials were used early in Hebrew history and led to refinements in the postcaptivity period.

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<sup>2</sup> Samuel Davidson, *The Hebrew Text of the Old Testament*, p.89, as cited in James Hastings ed., *A Dictionary of the Bible*, 4:949

<sup>3</sup> F.F. Bruce, *The Books and the Parchments*, rev. ed., pp.176-77

b. *Papyrus rolls* were used in the New Testament period, largely because of their inexpensive character when compared with vellum and parchment.

c. *Papyrus codices* were introduced when attempts at collecting the individual rolls revealed that there was a need to make them less cumbersome to handle. Formerly each book or group of books was written on a single roll, but this multiplicity of rolls was replaced by codices in the early second century.

d. *Vellum* was prepared from animal skins, chiefly from lambs and young goats, and was rather costly. It was used for more expensive copies of manuscripts.

e. *Parchment* was used as early as the days of the New Testament composition (cf. 2Tim. 4:13). Because there are various qualities of parchment and vellum writing material made from animal skins, they were often used during the same period of time. Codices of the two materials did not appear generally until after the Edict of Diocletian and were the primary materials used in manuscript copying in the Middle Ages.

f. *Redressed parchment* was used for copying manuscripts after the original writing had become faded. Sometimes parchments were “erased” and “rewritten,” as in the base of the Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C), also known as a *palimpsest* (Greek, “rubbed again”) *rescriptus* (Latin, “rewritten”). Needless to say, these manuscripts would be of a later date than the earlier text on the parchment.

g. *Paper* was invented in China in the second century A.D.; it was introduced into Eastern Turkestan as early as the fourth century, manufactured in Arabia in the eighth century, introduced into Europe in the tenth century, manufactured in Europe in the twelfth century, and became common by the thirteenth century. There were, of course, developments in the manufacture of paper, for example, with hemp, flax, linen, and rag content. Thus, the materials used in the manufacture of writing material on which manuscripts were copied assist in determining their age.

2. *Letter size and form.* Evidence is also provided by letter size and form for the date of a given manuscript. The earliest form of Hebrew writing was in the prong-like letters of the old Phoenician alphabet. This style prevailed until the return from the Babylonian captivity in Nehemiah’s time (c. 444 B.C.).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bruce, p.22; also see Merrill F. Unger, *Introductory Guide to the Old Testament*, pp. 123-25.

after Nehemiah the Jews apparently adopted the Aramaic script, as it became the vernacular language during the fifth century B.C. At that time, the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Aramaic; then, after about 200 B.C. , it was copied in the square letters of Aramaic script. The square characters of extant manuscripts are not identical to those of that early period, but they are direct descendants.<sup>5</sup> The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls of Qumran in 1947 brought even more precision to the study of Hebrew paleography, as it has brought a large quantity of early biblical and nonbiblical manuscripts to light. These manuscripts have provided the first examples of Hebrew texts from pre-Christian times, a thousand years earlier than the oldest Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts previously available. The Qumran manuscripts reveal three main types of text and indicate differences in matters of spelling, grammatical forms and, to some extent, wording from the Masoretic text. By the time of the Masoretes (c. A.D. 500-1000), the principles of the late Talmudic period (c. A.D. 300-500) became rather stereotyped.

Greek manuscripts were written in two general styles during the New Testament period: literary and nonliterary. The New Testament was probably written in nonliterary style. In fact, for the first three centuries, the New Testament was undoubtedly circulated outside the channels of ordinary book trade. Whereas the literary hand was well-rounded, graceful, and handsome, the nonliterary was smaller, square lettered, sprinkled with variants, and exhibited a general lack of literary exactness.

*3. Punctuation.* Further light is added to the age of a given manuscript by its punctuation. At first, words were run together, and very little punctuation was used. “During the sixth and seventh centuries, scribes began to use punctuation marks more liberally.” The actual process of change proceeded from spaceless writings, to spaced writing, addition of end punctuation (periods), commas, colons, breath and accent marks (seventh-eighth centuries), interrogation marks, and so on. It was a long slow process that was rather complete by the tenth century, in time for the miniscules and the golden age of manuscript copying.

*4. Text divisions.* It was not until the thirteenth century that modern chapter divisions appeared, and not until the sixteenth century that modern verses were introduced. But this development occurred prior to the mass distribution of the printed Bible, and it augmented the influence of the Rheims-Douay and King James Version of the English Bible.

*5. Miscellaneous factors.* Also involved in the dating of a given manuscript were such miscellaneous factors as the size and shape of letters within the **uncial miniscule groupings of manuscripts.**

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<sup>5</sup> Hastings, 4:949

Ornamentation is another factor in dating of manuscripts; from the fourth to the late ninth centuries the ornamentation of manuscripts became more elaborate in the uncial manuscripts. After that time, they became less ornate and less carefully copied. These factors helped to increase the popularity of the minuscules, which went through a similar development. Spelling was modified during the centuries, just as it is in living languages, and that helps date manuscripts. The color of the ink used is another important factor. At first only black ink was used, but green, red, and other colors were added later. Finally, the texture and color of parchment help date a manuscript. The means of parchment production changed, quality and texture were modified, and the aging process added another cause for color change in the material.

*C. The Preservation of Manuscripts:* Although manuscripts give information as to their date, and their quality is governed by their preparation, the preservation of given manuscripts adds vital support to their relative value for the textual critic and student of the Bible. That may be illustrated by a cursory treatment of manuscript preservation in general.<sup>6</sup>

1. *The Old Testament:* These manuscripts generally fall into two general periods of evidence.

A. *Talmudic period (c. 300 B.C. -A.D. 500)* produced a great flood of manuscripts that were used in the synagogues and for private study. In comparison to the later Masoretic period, for the Temple and synagogues there were very few, but they were careful “official” copies. By the time of the Maccabean revolt (168 B.C.), the Syrians had destroyed most of the existing manuscripts of the Old Testament. The Dead Sea Scrolls (c 167 B.C. -A.D. 133) have made an immense contribution to Old Testament critical study. There were many manuscript copies, confirming for the most part the textual tradition of the Masoretes.

B. *The Masoretic period (flourished c. A.D. 500-1000)* of the old Testament manuscript copying indicates a complete review of established rules, a deep reverence for the Scriptures, and a systematic renovation of transmission techniques.

2. *The New Testament Manuscripts:* New Testament manuscripts fall into four general periods of development.

A. *The first three centuries* witnessed a composite testimony as to the integrity of the New Testament Scriptures. Because of the illegal position of Christianity, it cannot be expected that many, if any, complete manuscripts from that period are to be found. Therefore, textual critics must be content to examine whatever evidence has survived,

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<sup>6</sup> Norman L. Geisler, William E. Nix, *A General Introduction to The Bible*, Moody Press, 1986

that is, nonbiblical papyri, biblical papyri, ostraca, inscriptions, and lectionaries that bear witness to the manuscripts of the New Testament.

B. **The fourth and fifth centuries** brought a legalization of Christianity and a multiplication of manuscripts of the New Testament. These manuscripts, on vellum and parchment generally, were copies of earlier papyri and bear witness to this dependence.

C. **From the sixth century onward**, monks collected, copied, and cared for New Testament manuscripts in the monasteries. This was a period of rather uncritical production, and it brought about an increase in manuscript quantity, but with a corresponding decrease in quality.

D. **After the tenth century**, uncials gave way to miniscules, and copies of manuscripts multiplied rapidly.

3. *The Classical Writings of Greece and Rome*: These writings illustrate the character of biblical manuscript preservation in a candid fashion. In contrast to the total of 5,366 partial and complete New Testament manuscripts known today, the *Iliad* of Homer has only 643, *The Peloponnesian War* of Thucydides only eight, while Tacitus's works rely on but two manuscripts. The abundance of biblical evidence would lead one to conclude with Sir Frederic Kenyon that "the Christian can take the whole Bible in his hand and say without fear or hesitation that he holds in it the true word of God, handed down without essential loss for generation to generation throughout the centuries." Or as he goes on to say,

*The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or another of these ancient authorities. This can be said of no other ancient book in the world.*

*Conclusion*: Between the autograph and the modern Bible extends an important link in the overall chain "from God to us" known as transmission. It provides a positive answer to the question: Do Bible scholars today possess an accurate copy of the autographs? Obviously, the authenticity and authority of the Bible cannot be established unless it be known that the present copies have integrity. In support of the integrity of the text, an overwhelming number of ancient documents may be presented. For the New Testament, beginning with the second century ancient versions and manuscript fragments and continuing with abundant quotations of the Fathers and thousands of manuscript copies from the time of the modern versions of the Bible, there is virtually an unbroken line of testimony.

Furthermore, there are not only countless manuscripts to support the integrity of the Bible (including the Old Testament since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls), but a study of the procedures of preparation and preservation of the biblical manuscript copies reveals the fidelity of the transmission process itself. In fact, it may be concluded that no major document from antiquity comes into the modern world with such evidence of its integrity as does the Bible.

## The Apocrypha

### I. Definition:

1. The word “Apocrypha,” as usually understood, denotes the collection of religious writings that the LXX and Vulgate (with trivial differences) contain that are not included in the Jewish and Protestant canon.<sup>1</sup>
2. When the word “apocryphal” was first used in ecclesiastical writings it bore a sense virtually identical with “esoteric,” as we shall see, so that “apocryphal writing” were such as appealed to an inner circle and could not be understood by outsiders.
3. The original meaning in classical Greek denotes strictly “hidden,” “concealed,” of a material object.
4. In this lesson apocrypha will be employed in the sense of “things hidden.”

### II. Use

1. Early Christian Usage:
  - a. The word “apocrypha” was first used technically by early Christian writers for the Jewish and Christian writings usually classed under “apocalyptic.” In this sense it takes the place of the classical Greek word, *esoterika* and bears the same general meaning, “writings intended for an inner circle and capable of being understood by no others.”
  - b. These writings give intimations regarding the future, the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God, etc., beyond, it was thought, human discovery and also beyond the intelligence of the uninitiated.
2. The Eastern Church
  - a. Christianity itself has nothing corresponding to the idea of a doctrine for the initiated or a literature for a select few.
  - b. The gospel was preached in its first days to the poor and ignorant, and the reading and studying of the Sacred Scriptures have been urged by the churches (with some exceptions) upon the public at large.

### III. “Esoteric Literature”

1. The rise of this conception in the Eastern church is easily understood. When devotees of Greek philosophy accepted the Christian faith it was natural for them to look at the new religion through the medium of the old philosophy.
2. Many of them read into the canonical writings mystic meanings, and embodied those meanings in special books, these last becoming esoteric literature in themselves; and in the case of apocalyptic writings, this esoteric literature was more revered than the Bible itself.

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<sup>1</sup> International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, pgs.161-187

**IV.** During the third century Origen, like Clement of Alexandria, was faced with the problem that no conclusively fixed boundary between the canonical and noncanonical books of the Bible had been recognized by the church.

1. He set about classifying Christian writings so that they fell into three basic groupings.
  - a. anathemata (“unobjectionable”) or homologoumena (“acknowledged”) which were in general use by the church.
  - b. amphiballomena (“included/contested”), which were contested
  - c. pseudepigrapha (“false”), which included books that were rejected as falsifications and therefore the products of heretics.
  
2. This classification was later reformulated by Eusebius of Caesarea during the fourth century.
  - a. homologoumena, (“acknowledged”)
  - b. antilegomena, (“disputed”), which were divided into two subcategories
    - *gnorima* (“acquainted with”), for those most Christians acknowledged,
    - *notha* (“illegitimate”), for those regarded as unauthentic.
  - c. apocrypha (“hidden”), which were viewed as spurious.
  
3. These arrangements of books have become settled in four categories
  - a. Homologoumena, books accepted by virtually everyone as canonical.
  - b. Antilegomena, books disputed by some.
  - c. Pseudepigrapha, books rejected by virtually everyone as unauthentic.
  - d. Apocrypha, books rejected by some as canonical or semicanonical.

#### **A. Books Accepted by All - Homologoumena**

1. The Nature of the Homologoumena:
  - a. The Homologoumena are those books that have been universally acclaimed as canonical from their beginning. They have appeared in virtually every ancient version and orthodox canonical list, as well as having been widely quoted as Scripture.
  - b. None of these books was deliberately deleted from the circulating canon in orthodox circles or brought into question by any prominent Father.
  - c. Of course, the exact number of these books will vary depending on one’s definition of “orthodox” and “prominent”; but for the most part, there is little disagreement on this point.
  
2. The Number of the Homologoumena:
  - a. Generally speaking, twenty of the twenty-seven books of the New Testament canon are considered to be undisputed.

- b. This includes all of the books from Matthew through Philemon, plus 1Peter and 1John. It is true that some also included the latter three books (Philemon, 1Peter, 1John) among disputed books; however, it is probably better to refer to those as omitted rather than disputed books.
- c. A disputed book is characterized as one that is retained and yet questioned, not merely one that is not quoted nor included in a given list.
- d. Unless there is clear evidence that a book was absent from a canonical list or from a Father's quotation (or enumeration) because it was considered of doubtful authenticity or authority, it would be better not to classify it as Antilegomena.
- e. In either event, if the seven disputed books were extended to ten, they, interestingly enough, would still be among the last books in the order of the New Testament canon.

## **B. The Disputed Books - Antilegomena**

1. The Nature of the Antilegomena:
  - a. It has already been implied that the reason for certain books having been classed as Antilegomena consists in the fact that these books possessed neither uniform nor universal recognition in the early church.
  - b. They were books that became the subject of canonical controversy and had, as it were, their canonical "ups" and "downs."
  - c. It should be said, however, that these books were seldom considered anticanonical, or even uncanonical. Instead, they were given a sort of semicanonical status, as has been accorded to the Old Testament Apocrypha.
  
2. The number of the Antilegomena:
  - a. There are seven books in the Antilegomena, that is, seven books that may be properly called, "disputed books."
  - b. Concerning the possibility of including three more books in this list, it should be noted that there is good early evidence for the canonicity of 1Peter, 1John, and even the brief epistle to Philemon.
  - c. Certainly there is almost no evidence that those who possessed the three books did not consider them authentic and apostolic.
  - d. The seven books that came into question for various reasons are, Hebrews, James, 2Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation.
  
3. In order to understand the issue at stake, the books "spoken against" (Antilegomena) must be considered.
  - a. *Hebrews*. This book was questioned because of its anonymity. In the East, where it is considered Pauline, it was readily received. The West was slower, however, because of uncertainty as to its apostolic authorship, and possibly because individuals in the heretical Montanist sect appealed to Hebrews for one of their erroneous Doctrines.

- 1) One other reason that the West was slow in its deliberation was its stress upon apostolic authorship rather than apostolic authority as the correct test of canonicity.
  - 2) In the fourth century, through the influence of Jerome and Augustine, the West finally recognized the epistle as canonical.
- b. *James*. James was questioned as to its veracity, although some questioned its authorship as well.
- 1) The supposed conflict with Paul on justification by faith held back full acceptance as late as the time of Eusebius.
  - 2) Even during the Reformation period, Luther had doubts about James, calling it, “flatly in contradiction to St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture.”
  - 3) Luther placed it at the end of his New Testament, along with Hebrews, Jude and Revelation, in a lesser position. As a result of the work of Origen, Eusebius (who personally favored James), Jerome, and Augustine, the West finally recognized its complementary nature to Paul’s epistles and hence, its canonicity.
- c. *2 Peter*. The genuineness of 2 Peter was questioned. In fact no other book in the New Testament has been questioned as persistently. (cf. Handout #3)
- 1) Even Calvin seemed to be unsure of it. Jerome stated that the hesitancy to accept 2 Peter was due to dissimilarity of style with 1 Peter.
  - 2) Whether, as Jerome thought, this characteristic is due to different amanuensis may never be fully settled.
  - 3) It is clear, however, that ample evidence is now available to attest that this epistle is rightly attributed to the apostle Peter.
    - a) Another reason for rejecting 2 Peter has been the claim that it is a second century work. However, W.F. Albright has pointed out the reminiscences of Qumran literature in 2 Peter and dates it before A.D. 80.
    - b) The discovery of the Bodmer manuscript (P72), which contains the earliest known copy of 2Peter (late third century), reveals that it was in use and highly respected by Coptic Christians in Egypt during the third century.
    - c) Besides the possible allusions to 2Peter in Pseudo-Barnabas 15:4 (cf. 2Peter 3:8), there is the testimony of Origen, Eusebius, Jerome, and Augustine, which finally triumphed. Benjamin B Warfield perceptively observes that there is more evidence for 2 Peter than there is for Herodotus and Thucydides.
    - d) Furthermore, there is positive internal evidence for the authenticity of 2 Peter. For although there are some marked differences, there are some close similarities to 1 Peter both linguistically and doctrinally.

- d. *2 and 3 John*. These books were also questioned as to their genuineness.
- 1) Because of their private nature and limited circulation, they did not enjoy a widespread acceptance.
  - 2) The author identifies himself not as an apostle but as an “elder,” another factor that hindered its acceptance.
  - 3) But the similarity of style and thought to 1John, and the use of “elder” by apostles on other occasions (1Peter 5:1), argues strongly for the Johannine authorship.
- e. *Jude*. This was disputed on the question of authenticity.
- 1) The majority of those who questioned Jude did so on the basis of its alleged references to the Pseudepigraphical *Book of Enoch*, (vv.14-15; cf. Enoch 1:9).
  - 2) Jerome specifically says this is the reason it was challenged.
  - 3) However the explanation which most commended it is that Jude’s citation of Enoch does not demand approval of the work as a whole, but extends only to those portions that he utilizes for his purpose. This situation is not materially different from Paul’s references to pagan poets (Acts 17:28; 1Cor. 15:33 (Menander, *Thais*); Titus 1:12).
  - 4) Like 2 Peter the Bodmer papyrus manuscript P72 from Egypt confirms the use of Jude during the third century.
- f. *Revelation*. The Apocalypse (Revelation) was included in the Antilegomena because its authenticity was challenged.
- 1) The doctrine of *chiliasm* (millennialism) was the focal point of the controversy, which lasted longer than that over any New Testament book.
  - 2) It is a curious thing that Revelation was one of the first books to be recognized in existing writings of the apostolic Fathers, and one of the last to be questioned.
  - 3) There is external evidence for its recognition from the time of the Shepherd of Hermes (115-140 a.d.), continuing into the Second century until the Montanists began to attach their unique form of millennialism to it.
  - 4) It seems clear that the question was not one of inspiration, but interpretation and association with particular doctrinal emphases that occasioned the dispute.
  - 5) Once this was understood, the authentic apostolic authority of Revelation was vindicated.

4. As with Revelation, so with all of the disputed books: once the question of authenticity or genuineness was settled, there was no problem about their canonicity.

5. It was clear that a book was written by a prophet of God, and it told the truth about God, man, and so on, then it was recognized to be the Word of God.

### C. The Books rejected by All - Pseudepigrapha

#### 1. The Nature of the Pseudepigrapha:

- a. During the first few centuries, numerous books of a fanciful and heretical nature arose that are neither genuine nor valuable as a whole.
- b. Eusebius of Caesarea called these “totally absurd and impious.”
- c. Virtually no orthodox father, canon, or council considered these books to be canonical and, so far as the church is concerned, they are primarily of historical value.
- d. These books indicate heretical teaching of gnostic, docetic, and ascetic groups, as well as the exaggerated fancy of religious lore in the early church.
- e. At best, these books were revered by some of the cults and referred to by some of the orthodox Fathers, but they were never considered canonical by the mainstream of Christianity.

#### 2. The number of the Pseudepigrapha:

- a. There was apparently a large number of non-canonical books even in the first century (2 Thess. 2:2,15; 3:17)
- b. By the ninth century Photius listed some 280 of them, and more have subsequently been discovered.

#### 3. The following list includes some of the more important Pseudepigraphal books of the New Testament.

- a. Gospels: There are more than fifty Pseudepigraphal gospels. However, many are known only by name and others by a few scattered citations in the church Fathers.

##### 1) *The Gospel of Thomas*- Early second century.

- a) The Gospel of Thomas was known to Hippolytus, Origen and Irenaeus.
- b) Like other accounts of the infancy of Christ, the Gospel of Thomas contains fanciful stories of alleged childhood miracles of Jesus.
- c) One story tells of when a “child ran and dashed against his shoulder, Jesus is said to have been provoked and said unto him: “Thou shalt not finish thy course (lit., go all thy way). And immediately he fell down and died.
- d) It appears to have a gnostic influence and reflect a dimension of personality in Jesus that is utterly at variance with that as set forth in the NT gospel accounts, **GIB pg. 302.**

- 2) *The Gospel of the Ebionites* - Second Century
- a) The Ebionites were a Jewish sect of Christians who stressed the Law of Moses.
  - b) They denied the deity of Christ, and are said to have accepted only one gospel.
  - c) They believed Jesus was a mere man who God adopted at the time of His baptism, **GIB pg. 303**.
- 3) *The Gospel of Peter*- Second Century
- a) Eusebius identified it as docetic, which means it denied the true humanity of Christ.
  - b) The Gospel of Peter teaches several things that fail to concur with the NT
    - 1) Pilate was guilty for the death of Jesus and only the Jews were answerable for it.
    - 2) Jesus felt no pain when crucified.
    - 3) That Jesus' "brother and sisters" were from a first marriage of Joseph
    - 4) It also contains an embellished account of the resurrection of Jesus, **GIB pg. 303**.
- 4) *Protevangelium of James* - Late Second Century
- a) It is mentioned by early church Fathers.
  - b) Only one manuscript copy is preserved.
  - c) It is characterized by a particular devotion to Mary.
    - 1) Speaks of her miraculous birth and her perpetual virginity
    - 2) Mary was born after only six months in the womb and walked seven steps only six months after her birth.
    - 3) Mary was only sixteen when all these mysterious things happened.
    - 4) The text contains one of the most outlandish miracle stories of Jesus birth, **GIB pg. 304**.
- 5) *The Gospel of the Hebrews* - Second Century
- a) A false gnostic gospel that was known to Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome.
  - b) It was mistakenly believed by some that this was the original Hebrew version of the gospel of Matthew, which many believe to have been written prior to the Greek version.
  - c) According to Irenaeus, it was used by the Ebionites to exalt the Old Testament law and to repudiate the apostle Paul.

d) Some of the features of the Gospel of the Hebrews include the following:

- 1) A special appearance of Christ to James, who, contrary to the canonical gospels, is said to have been at the last supper.
- 2) Reference to the Holy Spirit as our “mother.” Jesus said, “Even now did my mother the Holy Spirit take me by one of mine hairs, and carried me away unto the great mountain Thabor”

6) *The Gospel of the Egyptians* - Second Century

- a) This spurious gospel is mentioned by Clement of Alexandria and Origen.
- b) It purports that Jesus, “showed his disciples that the same person was Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.” There seems to be an early ascetic tendency in the cult that produced the work.
- c) This gospel has a gnostic disdain for Jesus’ body . For example it states, “When Salome inquired when the things concerning which she asked should be known, the Lord said: When ye have trampled on the garment of shame, and when two become one and the male with the female is neither male nor female.”
- d) In another instance it asserts, “The Lord said to Salome when she inquired: How long shall death prevail? ‘As long as ye women bear children’, not because life is an ill, and the creation evil: but as showing the sequence of nature: for in all cases birth is followed by decay.”

7) *The Gospel of the Nazaraens* - Early Second Century

- a) This book is closely related in content and compass to the synoptic gospels.
- b) It was referred to by Jerome as “the Gospel which the Nazarenes use.”
- c) Some of the features include:
  - 1) That the man with a withered hand was a mason who said, “I was a mason and earned [my] livelihood with [my] hands; I beseech thee, Jesus, to restore to me my health that I may not with ignominy have to beg for my bread.”
  - 2) It says (contrary to Matthew 12:40) that Jesus did not spend “three days and three nights” in the grave.

3) It declares, as Jerome notes, that “in the Gospel which is written in Hebrew characters we read not that the veil of the temple was rent, but that the lintel of the temple of wondrous size collapsed.”

4) It claims that thousands were converted at the cross when Jesus said, “Father, forgive them” (Luke 23:34): “At this word of the Lord many thousands of the Jews who were standing round the cross became believers.”

8) *The Gospel of Philip* - Second Century

a) This is a gnostic gospel known only by one citation until a fourth-or fifth-century manuscript was found in the Gnostic Library at Nag Hammadi, Egypt (1945)

b) It narrates the manner of the ascent of a soul through seven successive spheres of hostile “powers” (planetary archons).

c) It contains some noncanonical sayings of Christ, such as, “A disciple one day asked the Lord about something worldly. he replied: Ask thy mother, and she will give thee strange things.”

9) *The Book of Thomas the Athlete*

a) A gnostic-like gospel containing an alleged dialogue of Jesus and Thomas that occurred between the resurrection and ascension.

b) This book contains condemnations of the flesh, womanhood, sexuality, and promises of a future rest in the kingdom of heaven.

c) It begins, “The secret words spoken by the Saviour to Judas Thomas, and which I have written down, I, Matthew, who heard them while they spoke together.”

10) *The Gospel according to Mathias: Traditions of Mathias.*

a) Known by Origen, Eusebius, Ambrose, and Jerome.

b) Quotations from it are preserved by Clement of Alexandria

c) There is a Gnostic influence manifest.

11) *The Gospel of Judas* - Late Second Century.

a) This gospel was known to Irenaeus and Epiphanius (c. 315-403), bishop of Salamia.

b) The product of an antinomian Gnostic sect, it may have contained “a Passion story setting forth the ‘mystery of the betrayal’ and explaining how Judas by his treachery made possible the salvation of all mankind.

12) *Epistle of an Apostle* - Second Century

- a) Unknown before a Coptic text was found in Cairo in 1895.
- b) This presents a dialogue between Christ and the eleven disciples after the resurrection.
  - 1) “He entered into the womb of Mary in the disguise of the angel Gabriel.”
  - 2) “At that time I appeared in the form of the archangel Gabriel to (the virgin) Mary and spoke with her, and her heart received (me); she believed and laughed; and I the Word, went into her and became flesh; and I myself was servant for myself, and in the form of the image of an angel; so I will do after I have gone to my Father.”

13) *The Apocryphon of John* - Second Century

- a) This is a Pseudepigraphal post-resurrection dialogue between a disciple and the Revealer.
- b) It says, “I am [the Father]; I am the Mother, I [am the Son].”

**D. Books Accepted by Some - Apocrypha**

- 1. The nature of the Apocrypha:
  - a. For the most part, these books were not received as canonical and, like the Pseudepigrapha, they were used heretically by the sects and were even quoted by some orthodox writers.
  - b. Nonetheless, on the whole they have one further characteristic, namely, they were not only part of the religious literature quoted by the fathers, but sometimes appeared in local ecclesiastical canons and Bible Translations.
  - c. Some of the Fathers and churches considered several of these books to be canonical.
  - d. Nevertheless the testimony of the church in general, as well as the final canonical decisions, reveals that partial and local judgment was faulty.
  - e. Still, local acceptance and wide circulation of some of the books manifest their value as well as their esteem.
- 2. The number of the Apocrypha
  - a. Here again, the number is somewhat arbitrary, because it is based on two distinctions that are difficult to determine precisely, that is, the difference between the “orthodox” and “heretical” fathers.
  - b. In a general way, the latter may be determined by the canons and creeds of the church councils of the first five centuries, while the former by whether or not the book was used only homiletically, or theologically and authoritatively.

3. The following list fits into the category of books used at least ecclesiastically, and possible canonically.

a. *Epistle of Pseudo-Barnabas* (c. A.D. 70-79)

- 1) This is widely circulated epistle is found in the Codex Siniaticus (c. 340), and mentioned in the table of contents of Codex Bezae
- 2) It was quoted as Scripture by Clement of Alexandria.
- 3) It parallels the canonical epistle to the Hebrews in style although it is more allegorical and mystical than the Hebrews.
- 4) There is some debate as to whether it is a first or second century document.
- 5) Nonetheless, it may be concluded with Brooke Foss Westcott that “while the antiquity of the Epistle is firmly established, its Apostolicity is more than questionable.”

b. *Epistle to the Corinthians* (c. A.D. 96).

- 1) Dionysius of Corinth (160-80) says that this epistle 1 Corinthians by Clement of Rome, was read publicly at Corinth and elsewhere, and it is found in Codex Alexandrinus.
- 2) Herbert T. Andrews sums up the situation on this epistle, saying, “Today no one would put in a plea for its recognition as Scripture, yet from a historical point of view the epistle has no little interest for us...It gives us a very good conception of the Christian belief at the time...It contains explicit references to Paul’s first Epistle to the Corinthians, and gives several quotations from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and so proves that these books were widely circulated and recognized before the close of the first century.”

c. *Ancient Homily, or the so-called Second Epistle of Clement* (c. A.D. 120-40)

- 1) This was known and used in the second century and is also called 2 Corinthians of Clement of Rome.
- 2) There is no clear evidence that it was considered fully canonical, at least on any broad scale.

d. *Shepherd*, of Hermas (c. A.D, 115-40)

- 1) This is the most popular of all the noncanonical books of the New Testament.
- 2) It is found in the Sinaiticus, in the table of contents of Bezae, in some Latin Bibles, quoted as inspired by Scripture by Irenaeus and Origen.
- 3) It is a dramatization of spiritual truths and as such is like Ecclesiasticus of the Old Testament Apocrypha - ethical and devotional, but not canonical.

e. *Apocalypse of Peter* (c. 150)

- 1) This is perhaps the oldest of the noncanonical New Testament apocalypses, and it enjoyed great popularity in the early church.
- 2) It is mentioned in the Muratorian Fragment.
- 3) Its description of heaven is picturesque, and its picture of hell are grotesque, depicting it as a lake of “flaming mire” or a “lake of pitch and blood and boiling mire.”
- 4) As to its authenticity, even the Muratorian Fragment raised questions, saying some would not permit it to be read in their churches. The church in general agreed with that conclusion.

## E. Evaluation of the New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

### 1. The value of the New Testament Pseudepigrapha

- a. In general, these books have no positive theological value, and almost no historical value, except as they reflect the religious consciousness of the church during the early centuries.
- b. Their value may be summarized as follows:
  - 1) They contain, no doubt, the kernel of some correct traditions.
  - 2) They reflect the ascetic, docetic, and gnostic tendencies, and heresies of early Christianity.
  - 3) They show a popular desire for information not given in the canonical gospels, such as the childhood of Jesus, and the lives of the apostles.
  - 4) They manifest an illegitimate tendency to glorify Christianity by means of pious frauds.
  - 5) They display an unhealthy desire to find support for doctrinal interests and heretical teachings under the guise of apostolic authority.
  - 6) They reveal an unwholesome attempt to fill up supposed lacks in the canonical writings.

### 2. The value of the New Testament Apocrypha

- a. There is no doubt that the theological and historical value of most of these books is much higher than that of the Pseudepigrapha.
- b. In brief, they are valuable, but not canonical.
  - 1) They provide the earliest documentation of some of the canonical books of the New Testament.
  - 2) They reveal beliefs within the subapostolic church.
  - 3) They form a bridge between the apostolic writings of the New Testament and the patristic literature of the third and fourth centuries, thus providing some clues to that transition.
  - 4) They possess hints as to the rise of later unorthodox teachings (e.g., allegorical interpretation in Pseudo-Barnabas)
  - 5) They contain much historical value about practices of the early church.

c. With the above values in mind, it should be emphasized that none of these books is to be considered canonical or inspired. Several reasons may be proffered in support of that contention.

- 1) None of them enjoyed any more than a temporary or local recognition.
- 2) Most of them never did have anything more than a semicanonical status, being appended to various manuscripts or mentioned in tables of content.
- 3) No major canon or church council included them as inspired books of the New Testament.
- 4) The limited acceptance enjoyed by most of these books is attributed to the fact that they attached themselves to references in canonical books, because of their alleged apostolic authorship,. Once these issues were clarified, there remained little doubt that these books were not canonical.

#### **F. Conclusion:**

1. On the question of New Testament canonicity, twenty of the twenty-seven books were never seriously questioned in orthodox circles, namely the Homologoumena.
2. The other seven books, called Antilegomena, were questioned by some of the fathers for a time, but were finally and fully recognized by the church generally.
3. There are numerous books that were never accepted by anyone as authentic or canonical, which are called Pseudepigrapha.
4. The final class of books called Apocrypha, were of good quality and integrity that had a local and temporary acceptance, although they were never widely nor finally considered to be canonical.