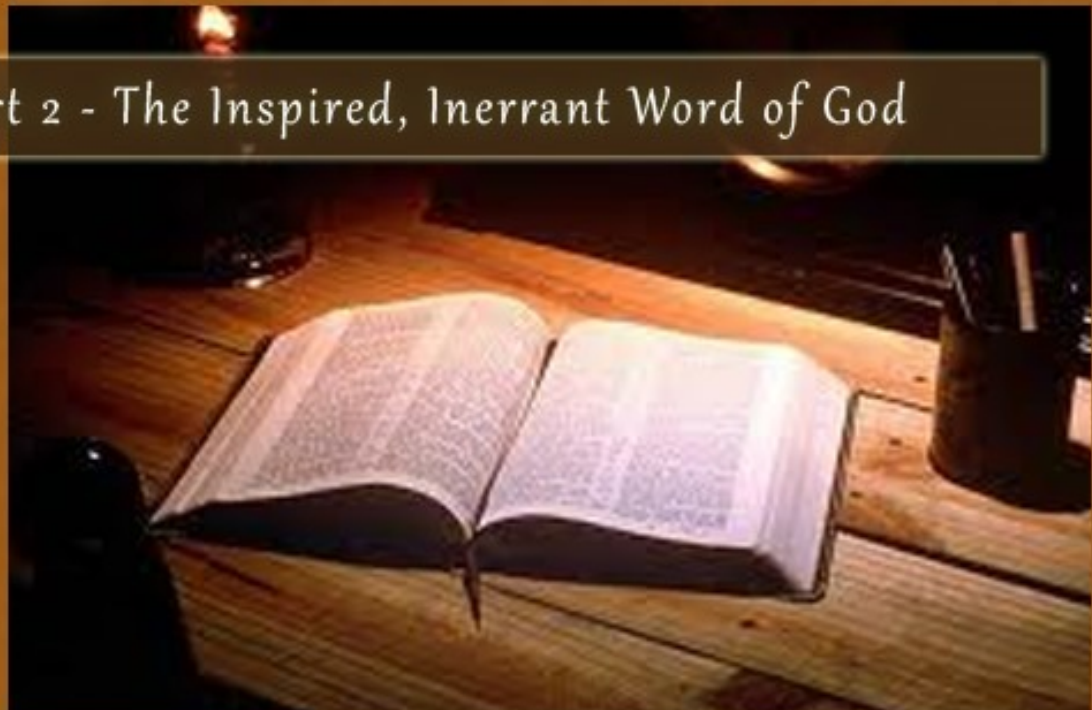


An  
Apology  
for the Bible

VOLUME 4

Part 2 - The Inspired, Inerrant Word of God



HIS STORY  
Early Church Fathers

Answering Questions About Your Faith





## for the Bible

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### why Apolo-

The word “apology” means to give an answer or defense for something.

Paul uses this word several times, most notably when he said...

“but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,”

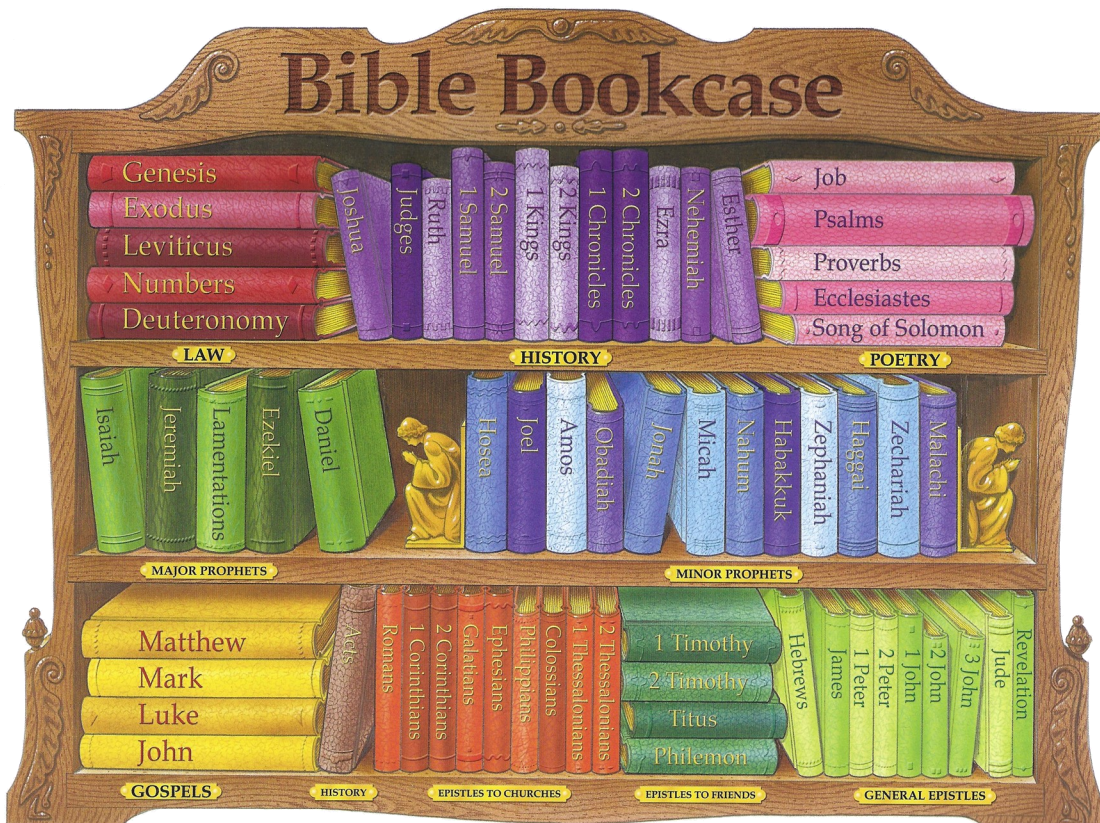
(1 Peter 3:15)

Why Apologize? 4



Early Church Fathers

37



From Rose Book of Bible Maps and Time Lines

The Protestant Bible consists of 66 books, 29 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.

### OLD Testament:

#### Pentateuch - 5 books

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

#### Historical Books - 12 books

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, First Samuel, Second Samuel, First Kings, Second Kings, First Chronicles, Second Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther.

#### Poetic books- 5 books

Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon

#### Prophetic books- 17 books

Major Prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel

Minor Prophets - Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi.

### NEW Testament:

#### Historical Books—5

Matthew, Mark, Luke, John—(The 4 Gospels) and Acts

#### Pauline Epistles—13

Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon

#### General Epistles—8

Hebrews, James, 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, Jude

#### Prophetic Book—1

Revelation

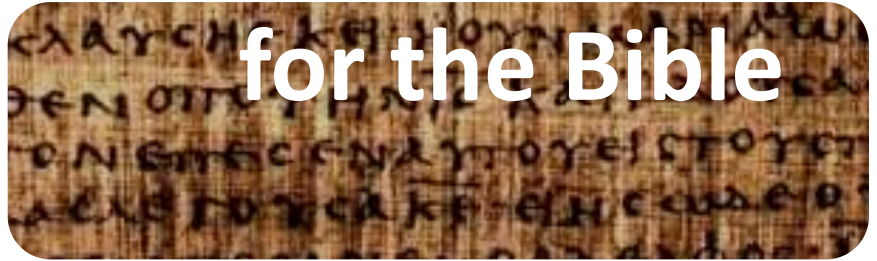
# What people have said about the bible

something



# An Apolo-

# for the Bible



## The Uniqueness of the Bible

From Josh McDowell's *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* Chapter 1: The Uniqueness of the Bible

**The Bible is Unique:** It is the book "different from all others" in the following ways (plus a multitude more):

### Unique in it Continuity

Here is a book:

1. Written over a 1,500 year span.
2. Written over 40 generations.
3. Written by over 40 authors from every walk of life including kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, etc.: Moses, a political leader, trained in the universities of Egypt Peter, a fisherman Amos, a herdsman Joshua, a military general Nehemiah, a cupbearer Daniel, a prime minister Luke, a doctor Solomon, a king Matthew, a tax-collector Paul, a rabbi
4. Written in different places: Moses in the wilderness Jeremiah in a dungeon Daniel on a hillside and in a palace Paul inside prison walls Luke while traveling John on the isle of Patmos Others in the rigors of a military campaign
5. Written at different times: David in times of war Solomon in times of peace
6. Written during different moods: Some writing from the heights of joy and others writing from the depths of sorrow and despair
7. Written on three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe
8. Written in three languages:
  - Hebrew: Was the language of the Old Testament. In II Kings 18:26-28 called "the language of Judah". In Isaiah 19:18 called "the language of Canaan".
  - Aramaic: Was the "common language" of the Near East until the time of Alexander the Great (6th century BC - 4th century BC)
  - Greek: New Testament language. Was the international language at the time of Christ.
9. Its subject matter includes hundreds of controversial subjects. A controversial subject is one which would create opposing opinions when mentioned or discussed.
  - Biblical authors spoke on hundreds of controversial subjects with harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation. There is one unfolding story: "GOD's redemption of man".
  - Geisler and Nix put it this way: "The 'Paradise Lost' of the Genesis becomes the 'Paradise Regained' of Revelation. Whereas the gate to the tree of life is closed in Genesis, it is opened forevermore in Revelation".
  - F.F. Bruce observes: "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".
  - Bruce concludes: "The Bible, at first sight, appears to be a collection of literature - mainly Jewish. If we enquire into the circumstances under which the various Biblical documents were written, we find that they were written at intervals over a space of nearly 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 heterogenous 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. In their ranks we have kings, herdsmen, soldiers, legislators, fishermen, statesmen, courtiers, priests and prophets, a tentmaking Rabbi and a Gentile physician, not to speak of others of whom we know nothing apart from the writings they have left us. 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".

Conclusion of continuity - a comparison with the *Great Books of the Western World*.

A representative of the *Great Books of the Western World* came to my house recruiting salesmen for their series. He spread out the chart of the *Great Books of the Western World* series. He spent five minutes talking to us about the *Great Books of the Western World* series, and we spent an hour and a half talking to him about the Greatest Book.

I challenged him to take just 10 of the authors, all from one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language and just one controversial subject (the Bible speaks on hundreds with harmony and agreement).

Then I asked him: "Would they (the authors) agree?" He paused and then replied, "No!" "What would you have?" I retorted. Immediately he said, "A conglomeration."

Two days later he committed his life to Christ (the theme of the Bible).

Why all this? Very simple! Any person sincerely seeking truth would at least consider a book with the above unique qualifications.

## Unique in its Circulation

I am basically quoting figures of just the Bible Societies. Figures are from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, *Encyclopaedia Americana*, *One Thousand Wonderful Things About the Bible* (Pickering), *All About the Bible* (Collett), *Protestant Christian Evidences* (B. Ramm) and *A General Introduction to the Bible* (Geisler and Nix).

The Bible has been read by more people and published in more languages than any other book. There have been more copies produced of its entirety and more portions and selections than any other book in history. Some will argue that in a designated month or year more of a certain book was sold. However, over all there is absolutely no book that reaches or even begins to compare to the circulation of the Scriptures. The first major book printed was the Latin Vulgate. It was printed on Gutenberg's press.

Hy Pickering says that about 30 years ago, for the British and Foreign Bible Society to meet its demands, it had to publish "one copy every three seconds day and night; 22 copies every minute day and night; 1,360 copies every hour day and night; 32,876 copies every day in the year. And it is deeply interesting to know that this amazing number of Bibles were dispatched to various parts of the world in 4,583 cases weighing 490 tons".

*The Cambridge History of the Bible*: "No other book has known anything approaching this constant circulation".

The critic is right: "This doesn't prove the Bible is the Word of GOD!" But it does factually show the Bible is unique.

## Unique in its Translation

The Bible was one of the first major books translated (Septuagint: Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, ca. 250 BC).

The Bible has been translated and retranslated and paraphrased more than any other book in existence.

*Encyclopaedia 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 of publication of 1,280 languages".

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

The Bible factually stands unique ("one of a kind") in its translation.

## Unique in its Survival

### Survival through time

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.

John Warwick Montgomery says that "to be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity to slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament".

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* (*parva*, *magna*, and *finalis*) they kept tabs on every letter, syllable, word and paragraph. They had special classes of men within their culture whose sole duty was to preserve and transmit these documents with practically perfect fidelity - scribes, lawyers, massorettes. Who ever counted the letters and syllables and words of Plato or Aristotle? Cicero or Seneca?"

John Lea in *The Greatest Book in the World* compared the Bible with Shakespeare's writings:

"In an article in the *North American Review*, a writer made some interesting comparisons between the writings of Shakespeare and the Scriptures, which show that much greater care must have been bestowed upon the biblical manuscripts than upon other writings, even when there was so much more opportunity of preserving the correct text by means of printed copies than when all the copies had to be made by hand. He said:

"It seems strange that the text of Shakespeare, which has been in existence less than two hundred and eight years, should be far more uncertain and corrupt than that of the New Testament, now over eighteen centuries old, during nearly fifteen of which it existed only in manuscript...With perhaps a dozen or twenty exceptions, the text of every verse in the New Testament may be said to be so far settled by general consent of scholars, that any dispute as to its readings must relate rather to the interpretation of the words than to any doubts respecting the words themselves. But in every one of Shakespeare's thirty-seven plays there are probably a hundred readings still in dispute, a large portion of which materially affects the meaning of the passages in which they occur".

### Survival through persecution

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 Roman emperors to present-day Communist-dominated countries".

Sidney Collett in *All About the Bible* says, "Voltaire, the noted French infidel who died in 1778, said that in one hundred years from his time Christianity would be swept from existence and passed into history. But what has happened? Voltaire has passed into history, while the circulation of the Bible continues to increase in almost all parts of the world, carrying blessing wherever it goes. For example, the English Cathedral in Zanzibar is built on the site of the Old Slave Market, and the Communion Table stands on the very spot where the whipping-post once stood! The world abounds with such instances...As one has truly said, 'We might as well put our shoulder to the burning wheel of the sun, and try to stop it on its flaming course, as attempt to stop the circulation of the Bible.'

Concerning the boast of Voltaire on the extinction of Christianity and the Bible in 100 years, Geisler and Nix point out that "only fifty years after his death the Geneva Bible Society used his press and house to produce stacks of Bibles".

In AD 303, Diocletian issued an edict (*Cambridge History of the Bible*, Cambridge University Press, 1963) to stop Christians from worshipping 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 above 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.

The Bible is unique in its survival. This does not prove the Bible is the Word of GOD. But it does prove it stands alone among books. Anyone seeking truth ought to consider a book that has the above unique qualifications.

### Survival through criticism

H. L. Hastings, cited by John W. Lea, has forcibly illustrated the unique way the Bible has withstood the attacks of infidelity and skepticism:

"Infidels for eighteen hundred years have been refuting and overthrowing this book, and yet it stands today as solid as a rock. Its circulation increases, and it is more loved and cherished and read today than ever before. Infidels, with all their assaults, make about as much impression on this book as a man with a tack hammer would on the Pyramids of Egypt. When the French monarch proposed the persecution of the Christians in his dominion, an old statesman and warrior said to him, 'Sire, the Church of GOD is an anvil that has worn out many hammers'. So the hammers of infidels have been pecking away at this book for ages, but the hammers are worn out, and the anvil still endures. If this book had not been the book of GOD, men would have destroyed it long ago. Emperors and popes, kings and priests, princes and rulers have all tried their hand at it; they die and the book still lives".

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 so chopped, knived, 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".

The phrase used to be "the assured results of higher criticism", but now the higher critics are falling by the wayside. Take, for example, the "Documentary Hypothesis". One of the reasons for its development, apart from the different names used for GOD in Genesis, was that the Pentateuch could *not* have been written by Moses because the "assured results of higher criticism" have proved that writing was not in existence at the time of Moses or, if it was in existence at that time, it was used sparingly. Therefore, it is obvious that it had to be of later authorship. The minds of the critics went to work: J, E, P, D writers put it all together. They went as far as to divide one verse into three authorships. They built great structures of criticisms. For an in-depth analysis of the Documentary Hypothesis see *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Campus Crusade for Christ, 1975)

But then, some fellows discovered the "black stele". It had wedge-shaped characters on it and contained the detailed laws of Hammurabi. Was it post-Moses? No! It was pre-Mosaic; not only that, but it preceded Moses' writings by at least three centuries. Amazingly, it antedated Moses, who was supposed to be a primitive man without an alphabet.

What an irony of history! The "Documentary Hypothesis" is still taught, yet much of its original basis ("the assured results of higher criticism") has been eradicated and shown to be false. The "assured results of higher criticism" said there were no Hittites at the time of Abraham, for there were no other records of them apart from the Old Testament. They must be myth. Well, wrong again. As the result of archaeology, there are now hundreds of references overlapping more than 1,200 years of Hittite civilization. For further details on the Hittites, see the author's book *More Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, pp. 309-311.

Earl Radmacher, president of Western Conservative Baptist Seminary, quoting Nelson Glueck (pronounced Glek), former president of the Jewish Theological Seminary in the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati and one of the three greatest archaeologists, says:

"I listened to him [Glueck] when he was at Temple Emmanuel in Dallas, and he got rather red in the face and said,

'I've been accused of teaching the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scripture. I want it to be understood that I have never taught this. All I have ever said is that in all of my archaeological investigation I have never found one artifact of antiquity that contradicts any statement of the Word of GOD'.

Robert Dick Wilson, a man who was fluent in more than 45 languages and dialects, concluded after a lifetime of study in the Old Testament:

"I may add that the result of my forty-five years of study of the Bible has led me all the time to a firmer faith that in the Old Testament we have a true historical account of the history of the Israelite people".

The Bible is unique in facing its critics. There is no book in all of literature like it. A person looking for truth would certainly consider a book that has the above qualifications.

## **Unique in it Teachings**

### **Prophecy**

Wilbur Smith, who compiled a personal library of 25,000 volumes, concludes that "whatever one may think of the authority of and the message presented in the book we call the Bible, there is world-wide agreement that in more ways than one it is the most remarkable volume that has ever been produced in these some five thousand years of writing on the part of the human race.

"It is the only volume ever produced by man, or a group of men, in which is to be found a large body of prophecies relating to individual nations, to Israel, to all the peoples of the earth, to certain cities, and to the coming of One who was to be the Messiah. The ancient world had many different devices for determining the future, known as divination, but not in the entire gamut of Greek and Latin literature, even though they use the words prophet and prophecy, can we find any real specific prophecy of a great historic event to come in the distant future, nor any prophecy of a Savior to arise in the human race..."

"Mohammedanism cannot point to any prophecies of the coming of Mohammed uttered hundreds of years before his birth. Neither can the founders of any cult in this country rightly identify any ancient text specifically foretelling their appearance".

### **History**

From I Samuel through II Chronicles one finds the history of Israel, covering about five centuries. *The Cambridge Ancient History*, (Vol. 1, p.222) says: "The Israelites certainly manifest a genius for historical construction, and the Old Testament embodies the oldest history writing extant".

The distinguished archaeologist, Professor Albright, begins his classic essay, *The Biblical Period*:

"Hebrew national tradition excels all others in its clear picture of tribal and family origins. In Egypt and Babylonia, in Assyria and Phoenicia, in Greece and Rome, we look in vain for anything comparable. There is nothing like it in the tradition of the Germanic peoples. Neither India nor China can produce anything similar, since their earliest historical memories are literary deposits of distorted dynastic tradition, with no trace of the herdsman or peasant behind the demigod or king with whom their records begin. Neither in the oldest Indic historical writings (the Puranas) nor in the earliest Greek historians is there a hint of the fact that both Indo-Aryans and Hellenes were once nomads who immigrated into their later abodes from the north. The Assyrians, to be sure, remembered vaguely that their earliest rulers, whose names they recalled without any details about their deed, were tent dwellers, but whence they came had long been forgotten".

"The Table of Nations" in Genesis 10 is an astonishingly accurate historical account. According to Albright:

"It stands absolutely alone in ancient literature without a remote parallel even among the Greeks...'The Table of Nations' remains an astonishingly accurate document...(It) shows such remarkably 'modern' understanding of the ethnic and linguistic situation in the modern world, in spite of all its complexity, that scholars never fail to be impressed with the author's knowledge of the subject".

## Personalities

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".

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:

- The sins of the people denounced - Deut. 9:24
- Sins of the patriarchs - Gen. 12:11-13; 19:5-6  
Evangelists paint their own faults and the faults of the apostles - Matt. 8:10-26; 26:31-56; Mark 6:52; 8:18; Luke 8:24,25; John 10:6; 16:32
- Disorder of the churches - I Cor. 1:11; 15:12; II Cor. 2:4; etc.  
Many will say, "Why did they have to put in that chapter about David and Bathsheba?" Well, the Bible has the habit of telling it like it is.

## Unique in its influence on Surrounding Literature

Cleland B. McAfee writes in *The Greatest English Classic*: "If every Bible in any considerable city were destroyed, the Book could be restored in all its essential parts from the quotations on the shelves of the city public library. There are works, covering almost all the great literary writers, devoted especially to showing how much the Bible has influenced them".

The historian Philip Schaff (*The Person of Christ*, American Tract society, 1913) 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".

Bernard Ramm adds:

"There are complexities of bibliographical studies that are unparalleled in any other science or department of human knowledge. From the Apostolic Fathers dating from AD 95 to the modern times is one great literary river inspired by the Bible - Bible dictionaries, Bible encyclopedias, Bible lexicons, Bible atlases, and Bible geographies. These may be taken as a starter. Then at random, we may mention the vast bibliographies around theology, religious education, hymnology, missions, the biblical languages, church history, religious biography, devotional works, commentaries, philosophy of religion, evidences, apologetics, and on and on. There seems to be an endless number."

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".

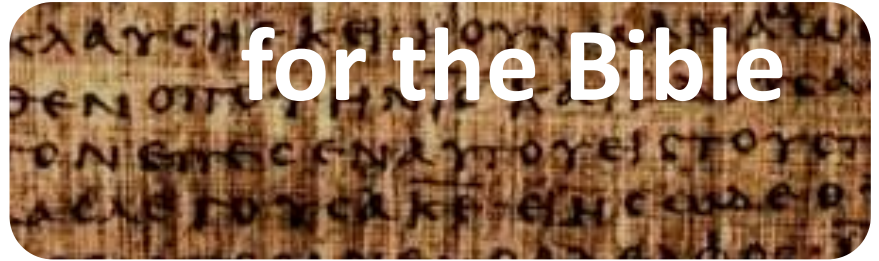
## The Conclusion is Obvious

The above does not prove the Bible is the Word of GOD, but to me it proves that it is unique ("different from all others; having no like or equal"). A professor remarked to me:

"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."

# An Apolo-

# for the Bible



## The Inspiration of the Bible

### The Necessity of Inspiration

As special revelation is God's communication to man of the truth he must know in order to be properly related to God, so inspiration deals with the preservation of that revelation so that what was received from God was accurately transmitted to others beyond the original recipient. In revelation we have the *vertical reception* of God's truth while in inspiration we have the *horizontal communication* of that revelation accurately to others. The question is how can we be sure the Bible is God's revelation to man and not merely the product of human ingenuity or merely human opinion? If what God revealed has not been accurately recorded, then that record is subject to question. The doctrine of inspiration answers that question and guarantees the accuracy of the Bible as God's special revelation.

### The Meaning of Inspiration

The English word *inspiration* has a number of connotations, the most fundamental being the act of drawing in, especially of the inhalation of air into the lungs. The word is also used of the stimulation of the mind or emotions to a high level of feeling or activity. Sometimes it is used of a work of art, as a painting full of inspiration. None of these really fit with the biblical concept.

In its theological usage inspiration is derived from the Latin Vulgate Bible where the verb *inspire* is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:21. The word *inspiration* is used in 2 Timothy 3:16 to translate *qeo pneustos*, a word that occurs only here. *Qeo pneustos* is derived from *qeos*, "God," and *pnew*, "to breath." Literally, it means "God-breathed" and expresses the concept of exhalation by God. More accurately, it emphasizes that Scripture is the product of the breath of God. The Scriptures are not something breathed into by God, rather, the Scriptures have been breathed out by God.

### A Biblical Definition of Inspiration

Inspiration must be carefully defined because of the varied uses of this term and the wrong ideas about inspiration being promoted today, ideas that are inconsistent with what the Bible itself teaches regarding inspiration. Inspiration may be defined as "God's superintendence of the human authors of Scripture so that using their own individual personalities, they composed and recorded without error His revelation to man in the words of the original autographs."

If we break this definition down into its various parts, we note several elements, each of which is vital to understanding what the Bible teaches about inspiration.

1. The word "superintendence" refers to the guiding relationships God had with the human authors of Scripture in the various material of the Bible. His superintendence varied in degree, but it was always included so that the Spirit of God guaranteed the accuracy of what was written.
2. The word "composed" shows that the writers were not simply stenographers who wrote what God dictated to them. They were actively involved using their own personalities, backgrounds, and God's working in their lives, but again, what was composed had the superintendence of God over the material written.
3. "Without error" expresses what the Bible itself claims to be true regarding its record; it is God's word and that word is truth (John 17:17; Ps. 119:160).
4. Though our translations of the Bible are tremendously accurate, being based on thousands of manuscript witnesses, inspiration can only be ascribed to the *original autographs*, not to manuscript copies or the translations based on those copies.

The following represent a few of the definitions of prominent evangelical theologians:

Benjamin B. Warfield: "Inspiration is, therefore, usually defined as a supernatural influence exerted on the sacred writers by the Spirit of God, by virtue of which their writings are given Divine trustworthiness."<sup>36</sup>

Edward J. Young: "Inspiration is a superintendence of God the Holy Spirit over the writers of the Scriptures, as a result of which these Scriptures possess Divine authority and trustworthiness and, possessing such Divine authority and trustworthiness, are free from error."<sup>37</sup>

Charles C. Ryrie: "God superintended the human authors of the Bible so that they composed and recorded without error His message to mankind in the words of their original writings."<sup>38</sup>

Millard J. Erickson: "By inspiration of the Scripture we mean that supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Scripture writers which rendered their writings an accurate record of the revelation or which resulted in what they wrote actually being the Word of God."<sup>39</sup>

To these definitions, Enns adds this important word:

There are several important elements that belong in a proper definition of inspiration: (1) the divine element—God the Holy Spirit superintended the writers, ensuring the accuracy of the writing; (2) the human element—human authors wrote according to their individual styles and personalities; (3) the result of the divine-human authorship is the recording of God's truth without error; (4) inspiration extends to the selection of words by the writers; (5) inspiration relates to the original manuscripts.<sup>40</sup>

## Biblical Data Supporting Inspiration

The concept that the Bible is inspired, breathed out of God, is not something man has forced on the Bible, but a concept fully in keeping with the claims of the Bible itself. Inspiration is the testimony of the Bible to itself. As in any just court of law, we need to allow the Bible to give testimony to itself.

### Key Facts About Inspiration

"All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness." The KJV has, "All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The NIV has, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." (2 Timothy 3:16)

A number of important things are stated in this passage regarding the inspiration of Scripture.

1. **The fact of Inspiration.** This verse unequivocally states that Scripture is God-breathed. The Apostle Paul, a man authenticated by signs and wonders (2 Cor. 12:12) and recognized as a writer of Scripture (2 Pet. 3:16), declares Scripture to be the product of the out-breathing of God. The question is, what of Scripture is inspired? "Our English word "inspire" carries the idea of breathing into something. But this word tells us that God breathed out something, namely, the Scripture. To be sure, human authors wrote the texts, but the Bible originated as an action of God who breathed it out."<sup>41</sup>
2. **The extent of Inspiration.** This is stated in the words, "All Scripture is inspired." The term "Scripture," the Greek *graphē*, is used exclusively in the New Testament of the sacred writings, of some portion of the Bible—sometimes of the whole Old Testament (Matt. 22:29; Mark 14:49; Luke 24:45; John 10:35), and sometimes of a specific passage (Matt. 12:10; Luke 4:21; John 13:8).

In addition, "Scripture" is even used of a specific New Testament passage and sometimes to a larger portion of the New Testament. In 1 Timothy 5:18, in support of paying elders for their work, Paul quoted Deuteronomy 25:4, but the words of Christ recorded in Matthew 10:10 and Luke 10:7 are also connected with Paul's statement, "For the Scripture says." This is probably the earliest instance of our Lord's words being quoted as Scripture. While this support for a workman is also found in other Old Testament passages like Leviticus 19:13, the wording clearly is that of Christ recorded in Luke 10:7. Then in 2 Peter 3:16, Peter specifically refers to Paul's writings as Scripture.

Some versions as the ASV and the NEB translate 3:16 as, "Every Scripture inspired of God *is* also profitable ..." implying some books are not inspired and do not belong in the canon of Scripture. Regarding this issue, Ryrice writes:

Most do not deny that 2 Timothy 3:16 includes all of the canonical books. Those who wish to try to reduce the amount of Scripture included in the verse do so by translating it this way: "All Scripture inspired by God is also profitable" (instead of "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable"). In other words, whatever parts of Scripture that are inspired are profitable, but other uninspired parts are not profitable. That translation indicates that only part of the Bible is inspired.

Such a translation is possible, but not required. Actually either translation can claim to be accurate. Both translations have to supply the word *is* since it does not appear in the original. The matter becomes a question of whether to supply "is" only one time or two times ("Every Scripture inspired by God is also profitable" or "All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable"). The preference goes to the latter translation for three reasons. First, by supplying "is" two times, both adjectives ("inspired" and "profitable") are understood the same way, as predicate adjectives, which is more natural. Second, the connective word, though it may be translated "also," much more frequently means "and." Third, a similar construction occurs in 1 Timothy 4:4 where both adjectives are clearly predicate adjectives. Thus the preferred translation makes it quite clear that all the Bible is inspired.<sup>42</sup>

**3. The value or purposes of Inspiration:** This is seen in the second statement of 3:16, "and is profitable for teaching, ..." along with verse 17, "that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Obviously, since all Scripture is God breathed, being the product of an all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful and loving God, the Apostle Paul goes on to state that the entire Bible is profitable for four things:

- **Teaching**— "Teaching" is the Greek *didaskalia* and means "doctrine" or "teaching." It is used in both the active sense (i.e., the act of teaching), and in the passive sense (what is taught, doctrine). In the pastoral epistles, Paul uses it of the act of teaching (1 Tim. 4:13, 17; 2 Tim. 3:10), and of what is taught as in sound doctrine (cf. 1 Tim. 1:10; 4:6, 16; 6:1, 3; 2 Tim. 4:3; Tit. 1:9; 2:1; 2:7, 10). As many of these passages show, especially Titus 2:1, theological teaching, if it is to be truly profitable, must be in accord with sound doctrine, truth from the inspired word. Ultimately, teaching or doctrine, which looks at the content, refers to God's fundamental principles for man's life both eternal and abundant. It gives us the basics, the fundamental truths upon which life is to be built.
- **Reproof**—"Reproof" is the Greek *elegmos* which means "proof, conviction, reproof." The most ending shows this is a passive noun which looks at the **result** of the process of the convicting ministry of the Spirit through the Word—personal conviction through exposure to truth. One might compare *elegmos* to another Greek word, *elenxis*, an active noun which looks at the **process** of reproof or exposing. Both need to go on in the life of a believer. The goal, however, is not simply the process. It's the result—personal conviction. Like the light it is, the Bible reproofs and exposes us to the various ways we violate the plan and principles of God in all the relationships of life, with God and with people as in one's family, in the church, and in society. Once we have been reproofed and experience conviction (reproof) to the violations, we each face a very important decision. We can move toward God and **respond** to His correction and training, or we can **rebel** and **resist**. If we resist, then, as a Father, He disciplines us to draw us back to Him.
- **Correction**—This is the Greek *epanorqwsis* which means "setting up straight, setting right." It stresses the restorative nature and capacity of Scripture and points to the more immediate work of the Word to set our feet back on course. The Psalmist wrote, "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul" (Psa. 19:7a).
- **Training in righteousness**— "Training" is *paidia* which basically means "training, instruction, discipline," not in the sense of punishment, but in the sense of the disciplines that train and develop character, strength, skill, etc. This is undoubtedly more long range and refers to those truths that develop godly character and spiritual strength—growth truths and procedures like Bible study, meditation, and prayer.



But these four objectives have a greater goal or purpose. The purpose is that “the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:17). The Bible offers us God’s comfort and His peace as it reveals His love, care, and mercy, but this is always in the context of conforming us into the image of His Son (Rom. 8:28-29) and equipping us for a life of good works (Eph. 2:10). Equipping us is designed to produce righteousness and ministry rather than self-indulgence.

The word “adequate” is the Greek *artios* which means “fit, complete, capable, sufficient: i.e., able to meet whatever is needed.” Being “fit” looks at the result or the intended result of a process, the aim in view. I think the process itself is seen in the word “equipped.” Note these three points about this word:

First, “Equipped” is the Greek *ezartizw* which means “to outfit, fully furnish, fully supply” as in fitting out a wagon or a ship for a long journey. It was actually used of outfitting a rescue boat.<sup>43</sup> We might compare our Coast Guard vessels and their crews that are so well equipped to go out and rescue ships in trouble.

Second, “Equipped” is an adverbial participle which points us to the mode or the means of becoming “adequate” “capable,” or “competent.” We might translate the verse as, “that the man of God may be capable, by having been thoroughly equipped.” In the context, the equipping comes from knowing this God-breathed book.

Third, the verb “equipped” is in the perfect tense which, in Greek, often looks at the results of preceding action or a process. In the context, the process is that of studying, knowing, and applying God’s inspired Word while the result is ability for ministry through spiritual growth.

God’s goal in giving us His Word and our goal in studying and knowing God’s Word is to thoroughly fit us out that we might become fully competent servants of God for every kind of good work in the midst of a dark and needy world, like thoroughly equipped rescue vessels on missions of mercy.

## The How of Inspiration

<sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. <sup>21</sup>For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:20-21 NIV).

The NIV translation above of verse 20 is much closer to the original Greek, more in accord with the preceding and following context, and clearly expresses the truth we need to grasp here. The statement, “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation,” simply declares that whatever the prophets wrote or whatever we find in the Word, it was not the product of the author’s own ideas or human opinion. In verses 16-19, the issue being discussed is the source of the apostolic message. Was it human fable or was it from God? Verse 20 answers the first part of this question. It was not from man.

The second part of this question or issue is found in verse 21. Note the connecting and explanatory “For” of verse 21. This teaches us that both God and man were involved in the production of the Bible, but in such a way that God was the ultimate source (though man’s will was involved, Scripture was never the product of human will). God both directed the writing and guaranteed the accuracy of the product. The human authors actively spoke God’s Word and they were more than dictation machines, but to ensure the accuracy of what was spoken, the human authors were moved and carried along by the Holy Spirit. “Moved” is *feromenoi*, a Greek passive participle meaning, “to be carried, be borne along.” This word was used of a ship being carried along by the wind in its sail in [Acts 27:15, 17](#).

Catching the import of this, Ryrie writes:

Though experienced men, the sailors could not guide it so they finally had to let the wind take the ship wherever it blew. In the same manner as that ship was driven, directed, or carried about by the wind, God directed and moved the human writers He used to produce the books of the Bible. Though the wind was the strong force that moved the ship along, the sailors were not asleep and inactive. Similarly, the Holy Spirit was the guiding force that directed the writers who, nevertheless, played their own active roles in writing the Scriptures.<sup>44</sup>

This verse, then, teaches us two things regarding the “How” of inspiration: (a) The will of the human authors never directed the writings of the Bible, and (b) the Holy Spirit as the ultimate source ensured the accuracy of what they wrote in every way.

## The Breadth of Inspiration

<sup>12</sup>Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual *thoughts* with spiritual *words*. (1 Corinthians 2:12-13)

The subject in this passage is God's revelation by which we know of the things of God, things which man cannot know by human wisdom. But the point we must not miss is that this revelation comes to us, not just in thoughts or concepts, but in specific words. This shows the fallacy of *concept inspiration*, that inspiration extends to the concepts, but not to the words. In its scope or breadth, by the Bible's own explanation, inspiration extends to the very words of the Bible.

<sup>3</sup>Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup>For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

It is clear from verse 4 and the reference to "His precious and magnificent promises" that Peter has the Word of God in view in these two verses. First, there is the declaration that God "has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." Second, life and godliness come through the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus, but such knowledge comes through the Word, the precious promises. In essence then, this points us to the breadth of what God's Word covers, "everything pertaining to life and godliness."

While God does not reveal everything that He could reveal, many things He has chosen to keep to Himself ([Deut. 29:29](#)), the Bible, in progressive fashion, does cover all that man needs for life and godliness through its revelation of God and of Jesus our Lord. We have everything we need, nothing is missing.

## False Views of Inspiration

### ***Natural Inspiration***

This view denies the supernatural element in biblical inspiration; the writers of Scripture were simply men of special genius who possessed unusual religious insight into moral and spiritual truth. Through their special abilities, they wrote the books of the Bible in much the same way as any individual might write any book. Through their religious insight, they wrote on religious subjects in the same way Shakespeare wrote literature. Writing by their own will, the writers conceived what they wrote.

### ***Spiritual or Mystical Illumination***

Regarding this view, Ryrie writes:

This viewpoint goes a step farther than natural inspiration, for it conceives of the writers as more than natural geniuses in that they were also Spirit-filled and guided. "The inspiration of the books of the Bible does not imply for us the view that they were produced or written in any manner generically different from that of the writing of other great Christian books.... There is a wide range of Christian literature from the fifth to the twentieth century which can with propriety be described as inspired by the Holy Spirit in precisely the same formal sense as were the books of the Bible" (Alan Richardson, *Christian Apologetics* [New York: Harper, 1948], p.207). Thus, (a) other Christian writings are as inspired as the Bible; (b) the Bible books are not infallible even though (c) they represent great religious literature that may even contain messages from God.<sup>45</sup>

In this view any Christian, if illuminated by the Holy Spirit, could be the author of inspired Scripture. Those who hold to this view teach that it is the writers who are inspired, not the writings themselves. Schleiermacher taught this view on the Continent while Coleridge propounded it in England.<sup>46</sup>

### ***Degree Inspiration***

This view holds to the inspiration of Scripture, but it holds that some parts are more inspired than others. It is true that some parts of Scripture are more relevant than others, but all of Scripture is equally inspired and accurate, and it all has an important place in the overall revelation of God.

### ***Partial Inspiration***

The partial inspiration theory teaches that some parts of the Bible are inspired and some parts are not. Those parts related to

matters of salvation and faith are inspired, but those parts that deal with history, science, chronology, or other non-faith matters may be in error. This view maintains that though some material may be in error, God still preserves the message of salvation. We can trust the Bible in spiritual matters, but in some areas, there may be error.

The partial theory rejects both verbal inspiration (that inspiration extends to the words of Scripture) and plenary inspiration (that inspiration extends to the entirety of Scripture). Despite the presence of errors in Scripture, partial theorists teach that an imperfect medium is a sufficient guide to salvation.<sup>47</sup>

But this creates real problems regarding the trustworthiness of Scripture. Ryrie writes:

But is not the biblical teaching about salvation based on historical facts? Suppose those facts are inaccurate? Then our understanding about salvation might also be erroneous. You cannot separate history and doctrine and allow for errors (however few) in the historical records and at the same time be certain that the doctrinal parts are true.<sup>48</sup>

The basic question then is what parts of the Bible can we trust and what parts are in error? Furthermore, who decides these questions?

### ***Conceptual Inspiration***

This view says that the concepts or ideas of the writers are inspired but not the words. God communicated the concepts to the human author, but not the words. It is true that a correct doctrine of inspiration does not include dictation, but God did superintend the authors so that the words they used from their own vocabularies were guided by the Holy Spirit. In response, how are concepts expressed, if they are to be expressed accurately? Through carefully chosen words. Further, both Jesus and Paul affirmed the concept of verbal inspiration (See [Matt. 5:18](#) and [Gal. 3:16](#)).

### ***Divine Dictation***

The mechanical or dictation view teaches that the whole Bible was dictated word for word by God; the writers were passive, much like secretaries or stenographers who sat and wrote down what was given to them. Concerning this view, Enns remarks:

This claim would render the Bible similar to the Koran which supposedly was dictated in Arabic from heaven. Although some parts of the Bible were given by dictation (cf. [Ex. 20:1](#), "Then God spoke all these words"), the books of the Bible reveal a distinct contrast in style and vocabulary, suggesting the authors were not mere automatons. The beginning student in Greek will quickly discover the difference in style between the gospel of John and the gospel of Luke. John wrote in a simple style with a limited vocabulary, whereas Luke wrote with an expanded vocabulary and a more sophisticated style. If the dictation theory were true, the style of the books of the Bible should be uniform.<sup>49</sup>

### ***Neo-orthodox or Barthian View***

This final view is a very dangerous view because those who hold it often sound evangelical, but they are actually often very liberal in their theology. This view teaches the Bible is not the Word of God, but only becomes the Word of God through a special encounter when God speaks to a person in some kind of subjective experience. In other words, the Bible only witnesses to the Word of God, but it is not the Word of God.

Moreover, the Bible is enshrouded in myth necessitating a demythologizing of the Bible to discover what actually took place. The historicity of the events is unimportant. For example, whether or not Christ actually rose from the dead in time and space is unimportant to the neo-orthodox adherent. The important thing is the experiential encounter that is possible even though the Bible is tainted with factual errors. In this view the authority is the subjective experience of the individual rather than the Scriptures themselves.<sup>50</sup>

Ryrie concludes his comments on Barthianism with these words:

Can such a Bible have any kind of authority? Yes, declares the Barthian. Its authority is in the encounter of faith with the Christ of Scripture. The Bible, because it points to Christ, has instrumental authority, not inherent authority. And those parts which do point to Christ have more authority than those which do not. Yet all the parts contain errors.

To sum up: Barthianism teaches that the Bible (B) points to Christ the Word (C). But in reality we do not know anything about C apart from B. It is not that we already have a clear concept of C by which we can test the accuracy of B, the pointer. Actually the Bible is the *painter* of C; that is, what we know about Christ comes from the Bible. So if the Bible has errors in it, the por-

trait of Christ is erroneous. And make no mistake about it, the Barthian Bible does have errors in it.<sup>51</sup>

Regardless of whether a person responds or has an encounter with God through the Bible, it is the objective and authoritative Word of God. The Thessalonian Christians accepted it as the Word of God, but Paul's comment regarding their response was not that they had an encounter so that their message became the word of God, but rather "when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe" ([1 Thess. 2:13](#)). They did come to know God through the Word, but Paul emphatically affirms it was the Word of God regardless.

In conclusion, the strongest defense for the verbal plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is the testimony of Jesus Christ. He testified to the inspiration of the entire Scriptures, the various books of the Old Testament and the actual words of Scripture as they were originally recorded. The fact that He based His arguments on the precise wording of Scripture testifies to His exalted view of Scripture. We will demonstrate Christ's view of Scripture under the concept of inerrancy. In addition, Paul declared all Scripture to be God-breathed; man was God's instrument, being guided by God in the writing of Scripture. Peter confirmed the truth by emphasizing that the authors were carried along by the Holy Spirit in the writing of Scripture. The testimony of each of these witnesses draws attention to the verbal plenary inspiration of Scripture.

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36 B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, Presbyterian and Reformed, Philadelphia, 1948, p. 131.

37 Edward J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1957, p. 27.

38 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media.

39 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1983, p. 199.

40 Enns, p. 160.

41 Ryrie, electronic media.

42 Ryrie, electronic media.

43 Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key To The Greek New Testament*, edited by Cleon L. Rogers, Jr., Regency, Grand Rapids, 1976, p. 647.

44 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology*, Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1987, electronic media.

45 Ryrie.

46 Enns, p. 161.

47 Enns, p. 161.

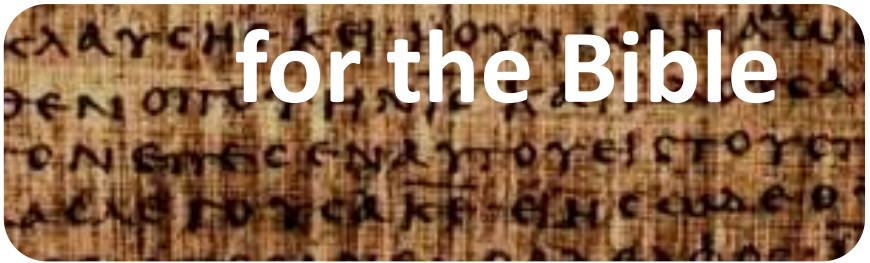
48 Ryrie.

49 Enns, p. 161-162.

50 Enns, p. 162.

51 Ryrie.

# An Apolo-



# for the Bible

## Inerrancy of the Bible

### A Definition of Inerrancy

The word inerrancy means “freedom from error or untruths.” Synonyms include “certainty, assuredness, objective certainty, infallibility.” But doesn’t the concept of inspiration automatically imply inerrancy? So we might ask the question, “Why this section on the inerrancy of the Bible?” Ryrie has an excellent explanation in answer to this question.

Formerly all that was necessary to affirm one’s belief in full inspiration was the statement, “I believe in the inspiration of the Bible.” But when some did not extend inspiration to the words of the text it became necessary to say, “I believe in the verbal inspiration of the Bible.” To counter the teaching that not all parts of the Bible were inspired, one had to say, “I believe in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible.” Then because some did not want to ascribe total accuracy to the Bible, it was necessary to say, “I believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant inspiration of the Bible.” But then “infallible” and “inerrant” began to be limited to matters of faith only rather than also embracing all that the Bible records (including historical facts, genealogies, accounts of Creation, etc.), so it became necessary to add the concept of “unlimited inerrancy.” Each addition to the basic statement arose because of an erroneous teaching.<sup>52</sup>

Clarifying the definition of inerrancy has become necessary because many have, in very subtle ways, retained words like inspiration, infallible, and even inerrant in speaking about the Bible while denying its freedom from error.

E. J. Young, in his classic work on the inspiration of the Bible, gives us good definition of inerrancy: “By this word we mean that the Scriptures possess the quality of freedom from error. They are exempt from the liability to mistake, incapable of error. In all their teachings they are in perfect accord with the truth.”<sup>53</sup>

Concerning the definition of inerrancy, Ryrie explains:

Definitions of inerrancy are not plentiful! Errantists equate inerrancy with infallibility and then limit its scope to matters of faith and practice or to revelational matters or to the message of salvation. An example of this: “The Bible is infallible, as I define that term, but not inerrant. That is, there are historical and scientific errors in the Bible, but I have found none on matters of faith and practice” (Stephen T. Davis, *The Debate about the Bible* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977], p. 115). At least this is an honest distinction between infallibility and inerrancy.<sup>54</sup>

In view of this, when defining inerrancy, it is always important to state clearly what it means and what it does not mean.

It does not demand rigidity of style and verbatim quotations from the Old Testament. ‘The inerrancy of the Bible means simply that the Bible tells the truth. Truth can and does include approximations, free quotations, language of appearances, and different accounts of the same event as long as those do not contradict.’ (Charles C. Ryrie, *What You Should Know About Inerrancy*, p. 16). At the Chicago meeting in October 1978, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy issued the following statement on inerrancy: ‘Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God’s acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God’s saving grace in individual lives’ (James Montgomery Boice, *Does Inerrancy Matter?*, Oakland: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1979, p. 13.)<sup>55</sup>

Ryrie makes an important comment regarding the statement at Chicago.

The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy in its Chicago statement affirmed inerrancy in a brief statement that the “Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching....” Then followed nineteen articles to further describe and explain inerrancy.

This brief statement would be unsatisfactory to errantists. If there were any doubt about that, certainly the nineteen-article elaboration would exclude errantists' agreeing with it.<sup>56</sup>

It is important to bear in mind that belief in inerrancy is in keeping with the character of God. If God is true and He is (Rom. 3:4), and if God breathed out the Scripture, then the Scripture, being the product of God, must also be true. This is why the Psalmist affirms, "All your words are true" (Ps. 119:160a).

## Theories on Inerrancy

- **Complete Inerrancy:** The Bible is fully true in all it teaches or affirms. This extends to the areas of both history and science. It does not hold that the Bible has a primary purpose to present exact information concerning history and science. There the use of popular expressions, approximations, and phenomenal language is acknowledged and is believed to fulfill the requirements of truthfulness. Apparent discrepancies, therefore, can and must be harmonized.
- **Limited Inerrancy:** The Bible is inerrant only in its salvific, doctrinal teachings. The Bible was not intended to teach science or history nor did God reveal matters of history or science to the writers. In these areas the Bible reflects the understanding of its culture and may therefore contain errors.
- **Inerrancy of Purpose:** The Bible is without error in accomplishing its primary purpose of bringing people into the personal fellowship with Christ. The Scriptures, therefore are truthful (inerrant) only in that they accomplish their primary purpose, not by being factual or accurate in what they assert.

## Clarifications Regarding Inerrancy

A number of different issues invariably come up when considering the doctrine of inerrancy. What about the variety of styles, or the varying ways certain events are described, or the different reports of events? How does this mesh with the concept of inerrancy? Paul Enns has done an excellent job in summarizing these fundamental issues.

- *Inerrancy allows for variety in style.* The gospel of John was written in the simple style one might expect of an unlearned fisherman; Luke was written with a more sophisticated vocabulary of an educated person; Paul's epistles reflect the logic of a philosopher. All of these variations are entirely compatible with inerrancy.
- *Inerrancy allows for variety in details in explaining the same event.* This phenomenon is particularly observed in the synoptic gospels. It is important to remember that Jesus spoke in Aramaic and the writers of Scripture wrote their accounts in Greek, meaning they had to translate the original words into Greek. One writer would use slightly different words to describe the same incident, yet both would give the same meaning, albeit with different words. There is an additional reason for variety in details. One writer might have viewed the event from one standpoint while the other gospel writer viewed it from another standpoint. This would make the details appear different, yet both would be accurate.
- *Inerrancy does not demand verbatim reporting of events.* "In times of antiquity it was not the practice to give a verbatim repetition every time something was written out" (E. J. Young, *Thy Word Is Truth*, p. 119). A verbatim quote could not be demanded for several reasons. First, as already mentioned, the writer had to translate from Aramaic to Greek in recording Jesus' words. Second, in making reference to Old Testament texts it would have been impossible to unroll the lengthy scrolls each time to produce a verbatim quote; furthermore, the scrolls were not readily available, hence, the freedom in Old Testament quotes (William R. Eichhorst, *The Issue of Biblical Inerrancy: In Definition and Defence*, Winnipeg, Man.: Winnipeg Bible College, n.d., p. 9).
- *Inerrancy allows for departure from standard forms of grammar.* Obviously it is wrong to force English rules of grammar upon the Scriptures. For example, in John 10:9 Jesus declares, "I am the door," whereas in verse 11 He states, "I am the Good Shepherd." In English this is considered mixing metaphors, but this is not a problem to Greek grammar or Hebrew language. In John 14:26 Jesus refers to the Spirit (*pneuma* = neuter) and then refers to the Spirit as "He" (*ekeinos* = masculine). This may raise an English grammarian's eyebrows, but it is not a problem of Greek grammar.



- *Inerrancy allows for problem passages.* Even with so vast a work as the Holy Scriptures it is impossible to provide solutions to all the problems. In some cases the solution awaits the findings of the archaeologist's spade; in another case it awaits the linguist's research; in other cases the solution may never be discovered for other reasons. The solution to some problems must be held in abeyance. The answer, however, is never to suggest there are contradictions or errors in Scripture. If the Scriptures are God-breathed they are entirely without error.
- *Inerrancy demands the account does not teach error or contradiction.* In the statements of Scripture, whatever is written is in accord with things as they are. Details may vary but it may still reflect things as they are. For example, in Matthew 8:5-13 it is noted that the centurion came to Jesus and said, "I am not qualified." In the parallel passage in Luke 7:1-10 it is noted that the elders came and said concerning the centurion, "He is worthy." It appears the elders first came and spoke to Jesus, and later the centurion himself came. Both accounts are in accord with things as they are.<sup>57</sup>

## What Happens If Inerrancy Is Denied?

How important is inerrancy? What happens when this doctrine is denied? There are those (and some are even evangelicals) who believe that inerrancy is not important. We do not need to defend the Bible, particularly as it relates to the details of chronology, geography, history, or cosmology or the so-called alleged discrepancies. But how sound is this kind of thinking and how does it stack up with the teaching of the Bible and particularly with what Christ taught?

If the Bible teaches inerrancy, then to deny it is to deny that which the Scripture claims is true. Further, if the Bible contains some errors, how can we be sure that its claims concerning Christ, salvation, man, etc., are true? Also, the chronology, geography, and history of the Bible are often woven together like strands of a basket with vital spiritual truths. As you cannot start pulling strands out of a woven basket without doing damage to the whole, so it is with the Bible.

For instance, is the history of Adam and Eve important? Absolutely, for Paul developed a theological analogy between Adam and Christ which essentially breaks down if it is historically not true. The Old Testament has dozens of prophecies of the coming Messiah that detail his lineage. If the genealogy of Matthew 1 and Luke 3 are historically inaccurate, then this raises questions about whether Jesus is the one anticipated as well as about the rest of His life.

As Ryrie points out, "Even if the errors are supposedly in 'minor' matters, any error opens the Bible to suspicion on other points which may not be so 'minor.' If inerrancy falls, other doctrines will fall too."<sup>58</sup> If we can't trust Scripture in things like geography, chronology, and history, then how can we be sure we can trust it in its message of salvation and sanctification?

I recently received an email question regarding the story recorded in the gospels where Jesus delivered two demon possessed men and sent the demons into a herd of swine. Assuming that the owners of the pigs were Jews (which they were not), the person sending the email doubted the historicity of the account because they could not imagine Jews raising pigs since it was contrary to the law for them to eat pork. A person believing in the inerrancy of the Bible, would know that the account was historical and accurate. Therefore, the apparent problem was not in the accuracy of the Scripture, but in their understanding of the event, which was precisely the case.

A denial of inerrancy is a serious matter and will lead to the following kinds of problems doctrinally and practically. When inerrancy is denied one may expect some serious fallout in both doctrinal and practical areas.

Some doctrinal matters which may be affected by denying inerrancy include the following.

- A denial of the historical fall of Adam.
- A denial of the facts of the experiences of the Prophet Jonah.
- An explaining away of some of the miracles of both the Old and New Testaments.
- A denial of the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch.
- A belief in two or more authors of the Book of Isaiah.
- A flirting with or embracing of liberation theology with its redefining of sin (as societal rather than individual) and salvation (as political and temporal rather than spiritual and eternal).

Some lifestyle errors that may follow a denial of inerrancy include the following.

- A loose view of the seriousness of adultery.
- A loose view of the seriousness of homosexuality.
- A loose view of divorce and remarriage.
- “Cultural” reinterpretation of some of the teachings of the Bible (e.g., teaching on women, teaching on civil obedience).
- A tendency to view the Bible through a modern psychological grid.

Inerrancy is an important doctrine, the denial or even diluting of which may result in serious doctrinal and life errors.<sup>59</sup>

### Support for Inerrancy from the Teachings of Christ

A study of what Jesus said about the Bible reveals not only His belief in its verbal, plenary inspiration, but that He also believed it was inerrant. In fact, the greatest testimony to the authenticity of the Bible as God’s inspired and inerrant Word is the Lord Jesus. Why is His testimony so important? Because God authenticated and proved Him to be His own divine Son by the resurrection (cf. Acts 2:22-36; 4:8-12; 17:30-31; Rom. 1:4). Christ not only clearly confirmed the authority of the Old Testament, but He specifically promised the New Testament.

Note what Christ taught about the inspiration of the Old Testament:

- **Its entirety;** the whole of the Bible is inspired (Matt. 4:4; 5:17-18). In Matthew 4:4, Jesus responded to Satan’s temptation by affirming verbal plenary inspiration when He said, man is to live by *every word* (plenary) that proceeds out of the *mouth of God* (inspiration). In Matthew 5:17-18, Christ promised that the entire Old Testament, the Law and the Prophets, would be fulfilled, not abolished. In fact, He declared that not even the smallest Hebrew letter, the *yodh*, which looks like an apostrophe (’), or stroke of a letter, a small distinguishing extension or protrusion of several Hebrews letters (cf. the extension on the letter R with its absence on the letter P), would pass away until all is fulfilled. Christ’s point is that it is all inspired and true and will be fulfilled.
- **Its historicity;** He spoke of the Old Testament in terms of actual history. Adam and Eve were two human beings, created by God in the beginning, who lived and acted in certain ways (Matt. 19:3-5; Mark 10:6-8). He spoke of Jonah and his experience in the belly of the great fish as an historical event (Matt. 12:40). He also verified the events of the flood in Noah’s day along with the ark (Matt. 24:38-39; Luke 17:26-27). He verified God’s destruction of Sodom and the historicity of Lot and his wife (Matt. 10:15; Luke 17:28-29). These are only a few illustrations; many others exist.
- **Its reliability;** because it is God’s word, the Scripture must be fulfilled (Matt. 26:54).
- **Its sufficiency;** it is sufficient to witness to the truth of God and His salvation (Luke 16:31).
- **Its indestructibility;** heaven and earth will not pass away until it is all fulfilled. Nothing can stop its fulfillment (Matt. 5:17-18).
- **Its unity;** the whole of the Bible speaks and witnesses to the person and work of Christ (Luke 24:27, 44).
- **Its inerrancy;** men are often in error, but the Bible is not; it is truth (Matt. 22:29; John 17:17).
- **Its infallibility;** the Bible cannot be broken, it always stands the test (John 10:35).

# An Apolo- for the Bible

## Illumination of the Bible

The Psalmist, affirming the Old Testament as God's Word, wrote, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, And a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). Later in this same Psalm he wrote, "The unfolding of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple" (vs. 130). Solomon wrote, "For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life" (Prov. 6:23). So David wrote, "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Obviously God has revealed Himself to us in His inspired Word that it might give light to our innate blindness. However, for the Scripture to give us light, it must be understood properly, then believed and applied in faith. But for man to understand the Bible properly, he must have two things: (a) he needs the illuminating work of the Spirit of God, and (b) he needs the proper method of interpretation for without the right method of interpretation, one is left on a sea of uncertainty.

### Its Illumination

#### The Need for Illumination

Though the Bible is a pure light that can direct our paths and bring us into an understanding of God and His salvation in Christ, man needs special enablement from God due to the Bible's spiritual dimension that raises it above man's natural abilities. "For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God" (1 Cor. 2:11). Furthermore, Adam's fall into sin and his consequent spiritual death rendered man incapable of comprehending the truth of Scripture. Simply put, the "natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised" (1 Cor. 2:14). This means a special work of God is needed to make the Scripture understandable to both the natural man (unsaved) and to the saved. As seen in the way Jesus opened the eyes of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, the work of *illumination* is necessary to enable us to comprehend the Word of God (cf. Luke 24:44-45).

#### Definition of Illumination

*Illumination* can be defined as "the special ministry of the Holy Spirit whereby He enlightens men so they can comprehend the written Word of God." *Illumination* begins with the pre-salvation work of the Spirit to bring demonstrable proof of the claims of the gospel that people might trust in Christ (cf. John 1:9; 16:8-11; 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 6:4). Generally, *illumination* is used in reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit in enabling believers to understand the Scripture (Eph. 1:18; 3:9).

#### Explanation of Illumination<sup>76</sup>

The doctrine of *illumination* must not be confused with *revelation* and *inspiration*. The following differences need to be understood:

1. *Revelation* refers to the content of God's truth as it was revealed to the Old Testament and New Testament authors of Scripture.
2. *Inspiration* refers to the accurate transmission of that content to men, first verbally (as with the prophets) and then in written form.
3. *Canonization* refers to the recognition and collection of those inspired books into a canon, the Bible.
4. *Illumination* refers to understanding of the Bible's message to believers. Unbelievers can only experience this work as it pertains to His convicting ministry in relation to the gospel message (John 16:8-11).

As the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit is the believer's means of spiritual illumination. Four New Testament passages focus on this ministry of the Spirit; these are John 16:12-15; 1 Corinthians 2:9-3:3; Ephesians 3:16-19; and 1 John 2:20 and 27.

The essence of these passages is as follows:

- As the Spirit of truth and God's special anointing, He is our Teacher. This is not a privilege for a select few, but is available to all believers since He indwells all believers. The teaching ministry of the Spirit is thus guaranteed to all believers.
- Since indwelling is limited to believers, unbelievers can only experience the illuminating ministry of the Spirit in the matter of convicting and convincing them of the truth of the gospel message (John 16:8-11). This does not mean they cannot achieve a high level of understanding of the Bible, but its truth remains foolishness and they do not welcome it.
- As the extent of the Spirit's illumination, it encompasses the whole council of the Bible, Genesis to Revelation and salvation to things to come.
- Several things can hamper the Spirit's ministry of illumination. Carnality (1 Cor. 2:1-3), indifference (cf. Heb. 5:1f with 1 Pet. 2:2), tradition and preconceived ideas (Mark 7:7-13), ignorance (Mark 12:24; Luke 24:25-32; "foolish" in vs. 25 is the Greek, *anohtos*, "not understanding"), and poor methods of Bible study or interpretation (cf. Paul's exhortation in 2 Tim. 3:15).
- The purpose of the Spirit's ministry is not to focus on Himself, but to disclose to us the glories and sufficiency of Christ and, as a result, to glorify Him (Eph. 3:16f; John 16:12-15).
- The Spirit uses those whom He has gifted with the gift of teaching in His ministry of illuminating others (Rom. 12:7; 1 John 2:27). 1 John 2:27 does not mean we do not need teachers. Otherwise, why would the Spirit give this gift? In the context, John was speaking of discerning truth from error.

Ryrie adds an important note about illumination and revelation.

The experience of illumination is not by "direct revelation." The canon is closed. The Spirit illumines the meaning of that closed canon, and He does so through study and meditation. Study employs all the proper tools for ascertaining the meaning of the text. Meditation thinks about the true facts of the text, putting them together into a harmonious whole and applying them to one's own life. The end result of the illumination ministry of the Spirit is to glorify Christ in the life, or to promote healthy doctrine—teaching that brings spiritual health and wholeness to the believer's life. Illumination is not concerned merely with understanding facts but with using those facts to promote Christlikeness.<sup>77</sup>

Historically, Protestant evangelicalism has affirmed that the Bible is the canon of Scripture, that it is our supreme authority in matters of faith and practice, and that the canon is now closed, but that God is still speaking today and that He does so by means of the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit through this completed canon. But a new proposition is being promoted today which states that God also speaks to His people today *apart* from the Bible. Most within the evangelical community would also add that, though He speaks *apart* from the Bible, He never *contradicts* what is in the Scriptures. But doesn't this new position threaten the sufficiency and finality of the Scripture? Many conservative scholars believe that it does.<sup>78</sup>

### **Its Interpretation**

If you will note, in the outline used here, *interpretation* has been placed on a level with *illumination* under the heading "Understanding the Bible." This is because the illuminating work of the Spirit goes hand-in-hand with the interpretation of Scripture. Although illumination is assured for believers, it does not always guarantee accurate interpretation. And if the interpretation is wrong, so will be the understanding of the passage in question. Many people approach the Bible with a false mysticism. Their attitude is, "The Holy Spirit will show what this means." But then they proceed to butcher the text and come up with some off-the-wall idea that completely misses what the Spirit is saying based on solid principles of Bible study or exegesis. The word that comes to mind here is *abuse*. In a chapter entitled, "Handling the Scriptures Accurately," Swindoll writes:

Ours is a day of abuse; sexual abuse, emotional abuse, verbal abuse. But what about *biblical* abuse? By that I mean being deceived by the improper use of Scripture. Who of us has not witnessed someone twisting Scripture, forcing it to mean something it does not mean?<sup>79</sup> Those who don't know better start believing it with all their heart, only to discover later on that both the interpretation and the application were fallacious ... perhaps dangerous to their spiritual health and growth.<sup>80</sup>

It is because of this very problem that the Apostle Paul, in a section where he was warning Timothy against false teaching that can lead to the ruin of the hearers, said, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, *handling accurately the word of truth*” (emphasis mine). Paul had in mind the important principle that we must correctly handle the Word of God in both its analysis (exegesis) and in its presentation (exposition) since Timothy was faced with the foolish interpretations of false teachers (as we often are). But the main emphasis is on the study and interpretation of the Word of God. What’s involved here? Is this a matter of sincerity or of theology?

Now this has nothing to do with *sincerity*. Many, perhaps most, people who mishandle the Word are very sincere. And it really has little to do with *theology*. Some who have their theology fairly well in place can still mishandle Scripture. It also has nothing to do with *personality*. There are gifted teachers dripping with charisma who can sway an audience and hold them in the palm of their hand, yet be guilty of mishandling Scripture. It certainly has nothing to do with *popularity*. Famous, highly visible personalities in Christian circles who can draw large listening audiences can (and often *do*) mishandle Scripture. So let’s put to bed, once for all, the idea that if a person just “loves the Lord,” he or she will be preserved from mishandling Scripture. No, even those of us who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture and affirm the importance of sound doctrine can be guilty of biblical abuse.<sup>81</sup>

Christians need to learn the basics of sound Bible study. Sound Bible study is that which is based on the fundamental principles of interpretation that will protect the student from Scripture abuse and that will provide a check on his or her own wild imagination. The following lists several important principles that are basic to the interpretation of Scripture.

### The Plain or Normal Method of Interpretation

The word *literal* is avoided here since it often leads to wrong ideas that must be later corrected. Rather, I am using the terms *plain* or *normal* to express the proper method of interpretation. By plain or normal we mean the words of Scripture are to be understood in their normal meaning just as we normally understand words in our normal, everyday communication. When we read the newspaper or a recipe in a cookbook, how do we read those words? We understand them according to their literal or normal meaning. If the recipe says two cups of flour, you don’t symbolize that to mean, a great quantity to be chosen at your discretion. If, however, it calls for a pinch of salt, you understand it to be somewhat symbolical of a very small amount.

#### Justification for the Plain, Normal Method of Interpretation

1. **The very purpose and nature of language supports this method.** This is how we communicate in everyday life. God gave us language for the purpose of communicating with each other and with Him. Ryrie writes:

Two ramifications flow from this idea. First, if God originated language for the purpose of communication, and if God is all-wise, then we may believe that He saw to it that the means (language) was sufficient to sustain the purpose (communication). Second, it follows that God would Himself use and expect man to use language in its normal sense. The Scriptures do not call for some special use of language, implying that they communicate on some “deeper” or special level unknown to other avenues of communication.<sup>82</sup>

2. **The need of control and objectivity.** Only the plain method of interpretation provides a check on the minds of men. The allegorical or spiritualizing method of interpretation leads to all kinds of abuse with one person seeing one kind of hidden meaning and another person seeing something entirely different. When interpreters disregard the normal meaning of words and look for supposedly hidden meanings, the true meaning of the Bible is lost; the Bible is abused; imagination and speculation go wild as the interpreter arbitrarily assigns this meaning and then that meaning to the text without any solid historical, grammatical, or lexical foundation for his interpretation.
3. **The example of the Bible itself.** A precedence for interpreting the Bible in this manner can be seen in the way Old Testament prophecies like Psalm 22, Isaiah 7:14; 53:1-12; Micah 5:2 have all been fulfilled literally or according to their plain meaning. To this someone might argue, “Aren’t some prophecies of the Old Testament fulfilled in a spiritual or typical sense in the New Testament?” To this question Ryrie says:

To be sure some prophecies of the Old Testament are given a typical fulfillment, only seven are cited as examples of a nonliteral hermeneutic. However, of the approximately twenty-four prophecies to which the New Testament gives a typical fulfillment, only seven are cited as examples of a nonliteral hermeneutic (and, of course, not all agree that these seven prove this). The seven are Matthew 2:15, 18, 23; 11:10; Acts 2:17-21; Romans 9:24-26; and Galatians 4:21-31. Remember, however, that we are not just comparing sev-

en out of a total of twenty-four, but seven out of a total of hundreds, for almost all Old Testament prophecies are clearly fulfilled literally in the New Testament. To be sure, the New Testament may use the Old Testament in ways other than fulfillment, but I am here speaking of prophecies and their fulfillments. This is a strong support for the literal hermeneutics.<sup>83</sup>

## Principles of the Plain, Normal Method of Interpretation

1. **We must interpret the Bible grammatically.** This is in keeping with the fact of *verbal (words) plenary* (full) inspiration. Every word of the Bible is important and though some words will hold more importance than others, all the words and sentences are a part of God's communication to us. "Only grammatical interpretation fully honors the verbal inspiration of Scripture."<sup>84</sup> Grammatical relationships are vital to sound interpretation because thoughts are expressed in words which stand in relationship to each other to express complete thoughts.

If we neglect the meanings of words and how they are used, we have no way of knowing whose interpretations are correct. The assertion, "You can make the Bible mean anything you want it to mean," is true only if grammatical interpretation is ignored.<sup>85</sup>

The hallmark of the Reformation was a return to the historical, grammatical interpretation of Scripture. This was in direct opposition to the approach to the Bible that had been in vogue for hundreds of years—the view that ignored the normal meaning of words in their grammatical sense and let words and sentences mean whatever the readers wanted them to mean.<sup>86</sup>

So, what is grammatical interpretation? Grammatical interpretation is the process that studies the text of Scripture (*exegesis*, the critical analysis of the text) to determine four important things: (a) the meaning of words (lexicology), (b) the form of words (morphology), (c) the function of words (parts of speech), and (d) the relationship of words (syntax). This means it is necessary to study the tenses of verbs, nouns and pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and the ways these words are structured.

2. **We must study the Bible historically.** As Enns points out, "The historical context is important as a framework from which to interpret the Scriptures. Every book of Scripture was written in a historical context that should be understood in order to help interpret the book accurately."<sup>87</sup>
3. **We must study the Bible contextually.** Every passage and all the words and sentences in that passage have a context. Take the passage out of the context, and you will miss its meaning and you may abuse the passage. "Words and sentences do not stand in isolation; therefore, the context must be studied in order to see the relation that each verse sustains to that which precedes and to that which follows. Involved are the immediate context and the theme and scope of the whole book."<sup>88</sup>
4. **We must interpret according to the analogy of Scripture.** This simply means, while always keeping in mind the context, etc., we also need to allow Scripture to interpret Scripture. If an interpretation of a passage contradicts other plain passages of the Bible, then something is wrong with the interpretation. Included here is a recognition of the dual authorship of the Bible.

The dual authorship of the Bible makes it necessary not only to know the human author's meaning but also God's. God's meaning may not be fully revealed in the original human author's writing but is revealed when Scripture is compared with Scripture. We must allow for a *sensus plenior* which allows for a fuller (though directly related) meaning in the mind of the divine Author of Scripture. We cannot say that the human authors of Scripture always understood the full implications of their own words. When we compare Scripture with Scripture, we can discover the fuller intention of the divine Author.<sup>89</sup>

5. **We need to recognize the progressive nature of God's revelation.** God did not reveal Himself or His plan all at once. The promise of salvation is revealed in seed form in Genesis 3:15, but it is expanded and developed throughout the Old Testament until we come to its fulfillment in the person of Jesus Christ and its full explanation in the New Testament. Once more let me quote Dr. Ryrie:

To be able to interpret plainly and consistently, it is imperative to recognize that revelation was given progressively. This means that in the process of revealing His message to man, God may add or even change in one era what He had given in an-



other. Obviously the New Testament adds much that was not revealed in the Old. What God revealed as obligatory at one time may be rescinded at another (as the prohibition of eating pork, once binding on God's people, now rescinded, 1 Tim. 4:3).

To fail to recognize this progressiveness in revelation will raise unresolvable contradictions between passages if taken literally. Notice the following pairs of passages which will contradict if understood plainly unless one recognizes changes due to the progress of revelation: Matthew 10:5-7 and 28:18-20, Luke 9:3 and 22:36, Genesis 17:10 and Galatians 5:2; Exodus 20:8 and Acts 20:7. Notice too the crucial changes indicated in John 1:17; 16:24; 2 Corinthians 3:7-11. Those who will not consistently apply this principle of progressive revelation in interpretation are forced to resort to figurative interpretation or sometimes simply to ignore the evidence.<sup>90</sup>

Since the whole area of biblical interpretation is such an important subject and so determinative on properly understanding the Word of God, a short bibliography is attached to encourage further study in this area.<sup>91</sup>

76 See article by Dan Wallace, "The Holy Spirit and Hermeneutics," on *The Biblical Studies* web site, under Theology/Bibliology. Though this article pertains to the issue of the role of the Spirit in interpretation, it obviously applies to His ministry of illumination as well.

77 Ryrie, electronic media.

78 For an excellent treatment of this issue and what the church is facing today, see *The Coming Evangelical Crisis*, General editor, John H. Armstrong, published by Moody Press, 1996. Particularly important for the issue here is chapter 4, "Does God Speak Today Apart From the Bible" by R. Fowler White.

79 See Wallace's article on "Scripture Twisting" under the section, "Prof's Soapbox," on bible.org.

80 Charles R. Swindoll, *Growing Deep In The Christian Life*, Multnomah Press, Portland, 1986, p. 69.

81 Swindoll, pp. 69-70.

82 Ryrie, electronic media.

83 Ryrie, electronic media.

84 Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, Victor Books, Wheaton, 1991, p. 99.

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86 Zuck, p. 98.

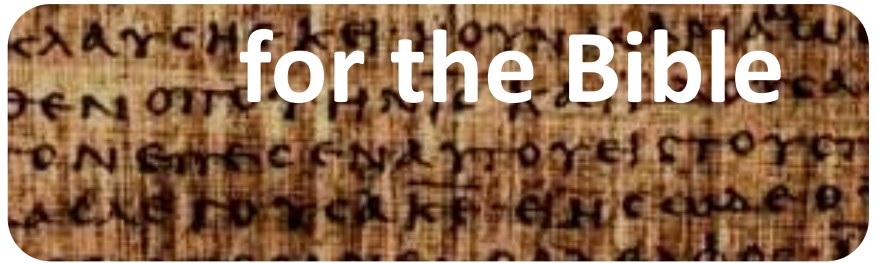
87 Enns, p. 176.

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91 Roy B. Zuck, *Basic Bible Interpretation*, Victor Books, 1991, Wheaton; Robert A. Traina, *Methodical Bible Study*, Bookroom, The Biblical Seminary, New York (this is a great classic), 1952; Howard G. Hendricks, William D. Hendricks, *Living By The Book*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1991; Irving L. Jensen, *Independent Bible Study*, Moody, Chicago, 1963; Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed., Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1963; Oletta Wald, *The Joy of Discovery in Bible Study*, rev. ed., Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1975.



## Problems in the Bible

An Excerpt from “The Uniqueness of the Bible” by Kenneth Boa  
<http://bible.org/print/book/export/html/18590>

### The Problem of Science and the Bible

The most frequently raised scientific issue is the question of evolution. Everyone who believes the Bible accepts the fact that God is the Creator of the universe. But while evangelicals agree on the who, they do not all agree on the how of creation. Many believe that this is a young earth and that the six days of creation in Genesis 1 are 24-hour days. Others believe that these days are figurative, and that God directly intervened at various points in the long evolutionary process. The question here is not who is right, but how to deal with the issue of evolution when the non-Christian raises it as an objection to the existence of God or the reliability of the Genesis creation account. The most basic issue is nontheistic evolution versus creation by God, not the age of the earth.

The nontheistic evolutionary model assumes that nonliving systems generated life by means of time plus chance, and that microevolution (small changes) leads to macroevolution (large changes, as in the microbe-to-man theory). The philosophical problem with this model is that it makes the effects (complexity, life, intelligence, personality) greater than the causes (disorder, nonlife, random interactions and mutations, and impersonal events).

There are also scientific problems with nontheistic evolution. It offers no workable mechanism that will account for the first living cell, let alone the complexity of the human brain. The chemical production of a first living cell would have to follow this sequence: (1) Random atoms must be formed into amino acids. (2) These amino acids must link together to form chains (polypeptides). (3) These chains must become long (hundreds of amino acids) and they must form in an ordered sequence, since there are 20 kinds of amino acids. This will produce a simple protein molecule. (4) More complex proteins must be produced. (5) Very long and highly ordered molecular chains known as DNA must be formed and maintained. (6) An enormously complex chemical factory must be produced, complete with special protein formations, enzymes, DNA, RNA, ribosomes, a cell wall, etc. This single cell must be able to reproduce itself and carry on all the functions of life. Without a rational ordering agent, every step but the first would require nothing short of a statistical miracle, even under the most ideal circumstances. Many people argue that, given enough time, even the most improbable events become probable. This sounds reasonable only until specific numbers are used.

Consider George Bernard Shaw’s argument that if a million monkeys constantly typed on a million typewriters for a long enough time, one of them would eventually pound out a Shakespearean play. Assume a million monkeys typing 24 hours a day at 100 words a minute on typewriters with 40 keys. If each word of the play contained four letters, the first word would be typed by one of the monkeys in about 12 seconds. However, it would require about five days to get the first two words (eight letters) on one of the typewriters. How long would it take to get the first four words? About 100 billion years! No one could imagine the amount of time which would be required to produce the first scene.

Beginning with the first step, many evolutionists assume a primordial earthly atmosphere with no oxygen so that amino acids could be formed. However, the very atmosphere that could produce them would immediately lead to their destruction (due to ultraviolet light penetrating this oxygen-free atmosphere) unless they were protected. Unfounded assumptions must be multiplied to overcome this problem.

On the next level, let us assume an ideal environment with a primordial soup full of amino acids and the proper catalysts, with just the right temperature and moisture. Some estimate that under these favorable conditions the chances of getting dipeptides (two amino acids bonded) would be about one in 100. But the chances of tripeptide formation would be about one in

10,000. To get a polypeptide of only ten amino acids, the probability would be one chance in 100,000,000,000,000,000 (100 quintillion). Yet the proteins in the simplest living things have chains of at least 400 amino acids on the average.

To make matters worse, all proteins are built of amino acids that are exclusively “left-handed” in their molecular orientation. Left-handed and right handed amino acids are mirror images of each other, and their chances of formation are about the same. Although both kinds can link with each other, the first living systems must have been built with left-handed components only. Some scientists have evoked natural selection here, but this only applies to systems that can already reproduce themselves. Without an intelligent ordering agent, we have only chance to explain this amazing phenomenon. For a chain of 400 left-handed amino acids, the odds would be roughly equivalent to tossing an ordinary coin and coming up with tails 400 times in a row. The chances for that would be approximately one in 10<sup>120</sup> (a 1 followed by 120 zeroes). All this for one protein molecule, and hundreds of similar molecules would be needed in the first living system.

None of this accounts for the fact that the 20 kinds of amino acids operate like letters in an alphabet, and they must link in a meaningful sequence to form a usable protein. A random sequence of amino acids would be utterly useless. DNA is far more complex than any of this, and it too is built out of a highly organized alphabet. The letters are molecules called nucleotides. A cell contains a chain of about three billion pairs of these nucleotides (each gene has about 1,200 nucleotide pairs). The order of these nucleotides or bases is crucial because every triplet of bases along this immense chain is a word. Each word stands for one of the 20 kinds of amino acids. Using these words the DNA can literally create any kind of protein that the cell needs.

The amount of time required to synthesize even one gene (a paragraph of these words) has been calculated by some scientists using absurdly generous assumptions. Using a variation on a well-known illustration, suppose a bird came once every billion years and removed only one atom from a stone the size of the solar system. The amount of time required for the stone to be worn to nothing would be negligible compared to the time needed to create a useful gene by chance, even accounting for chemical affinities and an ideal environment. Shaw’s monkeys would long since have pounded out the words of Shakespeare!

But none of this can compare to the far greater complexity of a living cell. Even the simplest living system would require elaborately coded information, growth, reproduction, stability, adaptability, environmental response, and metabolism. Yet evolutionists demand spontaneous generation of life through chemical interaction because they think the only other option would be a miracle. In reality, a miracle cannot be avoided. The only question is whether life appeared out of the primordial soup or by the living God.

In addition, none of the above considers the fact that every chemical reaction along the way from amino acids to life is reversible. This means that whenever a higher point of complexity is reached, it is unstable compared to its environment and may break down into its components. A polypeptide bond of four amino acids can easily break down into four separate amino acids.

The second law of thermodynamics tells us that all natural processes cause a net increase in entropy (disorder) and a net loss of useful energy. Any system left to itself will decay and degenerate. Free energy from the sun can cause slight increases in complexity, but the breakdown rate soon matches the buildup rate. The only way to build structures as complex as protein is to have an already existing machine that can translate raw energy into a more highly organized form. Solar energy may be plentiful, but it is useless for building complex systems unless such systems already exist. Life comes only from life, complexity only from complexity. Faith in an original spontaneous generation of life goes against all experience and evidence. It has been said that “teleology is a lady without whom no biologist can exist; yet he is ashamed to be seen with her in public.” Design requires a designer, and this is precisely what is lacking in nontheistic evolution. Of course, the subject of evolution entails other matters such as mutations and natural selection, comparative anatomy, the fossil record, and fossil men. These are not trivial matters, but the most basic issue is that the impersonal mechanism of evolution will not by itself produce life or personality. Whether or not God superintended any kind of evolutionary process is an entirely different issue, and those who accept the Genesis creation account are divided on this matter. Scientists who acknowledge the authority of Scripture do not have a uniform view of the age of the earth, and they interpret the fossil evidence and the geological strata in different ways. On the other hand, the speculations of some nontheistic evolutionists sometimes stretch beyond the limits of the scientific method as they conceive scenarios that are clearly contrary to the biblical world view. Forgetting the tentative nature of science, they make confident assertions about the genesis of life and man. But even if a theory demonstrates how something might have happened, this is a far cry from proving that it really did happen this way.

We must also remember that the Bible is not a scientific textbook, but when it does touch on scientific matters, it has proven to be trustworthy. In the past, two problems have contributed to misunderstanding about the scientific validity of the Bible.

The first is the erroneous scientific conclusions drawn from the Bible by the church. The most notable error is the teaching that the sun and planets revolve around the earth. Some writers delight in referring to the trial of Galileo for his "heretical" notion that the sun may be the center of the solar system, but the Bible cannot be blamed for this blunder. The second cause of misunderstanding is that the Bible uses phenomenological language. That is, it describes nature as it appears to the eye. Thus, it speaks of sunrises and sunsets ("Its rising is from one end of heaven, and its circuit to the other end; and there is nothing hidden from its heat," Ps. 19:6). But this does not teach that the sun rotates about the earth any more than today's scientist means this when he uses the term "sunrise" and "sunset." Others say that the Bible is in error because it says that pi is equal to 3 instead of 3.14. They base this on 1 Kings 7:23 where a laver ten cubits in diameter is given a circumference of 30 cubits. Comparing 7:23 with 7:26, however, it appears that the circumference was measured by using the inside diameter. The biblical phrase "the four corners of the earth" has been misunderstood to mean that the earth is flat with four literal corners. But Scripture uses this phrase figuratively, referring to all directions (Isa. 11:12; Ezek. 7:2; Rev. 7:1; 20:8).

When the Bible makes positive statements about the workings of nature, it is quite accurate, often running contrary to the erroneous concepts that were held in the time it was written. Job 36:27-29 gives an excellent description of the hydrologic cycle of evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. The statement about the earth in Job 26:7 was also far ahead of its time: "He stretches out the north over empty space; He hangs the earth on nothing." Other biblical statements about astronomy, biology, and medicine (e.g., the quarantine and sanitary laws of Leviticus) are equally remarkable.

### **Ethical Problems in the Bible**

Two of the major ethical difficulties people have with the Bible are genocide and slavery. The Bible presents the greatest set of ethical standards the world has ever known, focusing on love for God and one's neighbor. This makes God's genocidal command to utterly destroy the inhabitants of Canaan in Deuteronomy 20:10-18 (cf. Josh. 6:21) especially perplexing. There is no simple solution to this problem, but it can be substantially reduced by looking at it from several biblical perspectives:

1. It is easy to become so earthbound in our view of life that we forget that the author and giver of life has every right to take it away.
2. The sixth commandment is best translated "You shall not murder" (Exod. 20:13). This did not prohibit the taking of human life in fulfillment of the divine command for social justice in Israel (capital punishment) or for national defense.
3. The command to annihilate another nation (the Canaanites) was completely unique in Israel's history.
4. Israel at this time was a theocracy, and there is no parallel for this in world history.
5. As a redeemed nation, the children of Israel were to be distinct from all other nations. The idolatry and immorality of the Canaanites would have defiled them if Israel coexisted with them (Deut. 20:18).
6. God used the Israelites as His rod of judgment upon the Canaanites because of their gross immorality and wickedness. Archaeological discoveries confirm that Canaan at this time was overrun with religious prostitution, infant sacrifice, bestiality, and other abominations. Thus, the seeming cruel removal of the unrepentant Canaanites was not unlike the removal of a cancerous tumor.

Concerning the problem of slavery, here are three observations:

1. Slavery as we now understand it is quite different from the kind of slavery permitted in the Bible. Slaves were to be treated with human dignity and respect (Job 31:13-15), and if their masters violated their basic rights or abused them, they were to be set free (Exod. 21:26-27). If a slave ran away from his master, he was not to be mistreated or even returned (Deut. 23:15-16). Slaves were also allowed to participate in Israel's worship.
2. The institution of this system of slavery was a cultural phenomenon, designed to make the perpetuation of the patriarchal family unit economically feasible. This is foreign to our own culture, but it would be wrong to absolutize our own cultural values.
3. Although the New Testament also allowed for slavery, the epistles make it clear that all believers have an equal

standing before the Father (Gal. 3:28). The reality of Christ was to transform every human relationship, and Christian principles cried out against the abuses of slavery. Some people are troubled about the wrath of God and blood sacrifices. God is a God of love and mercy, but He is also a holy and righteous God. These divine attributes are found from Genesis to Revelation, and they are complementary, not contradictory. His love is a holy love, and His wrath is never capricious but always directed against sin and its dehumanizing results. The values of our society have become so diluted and distorted that the holiness of God and the sinfulness of sin have become foreign concepts to many. Concerning blood sacrifices, the New Testament makes it clear that they all pointed ahead to Christ, the Lamb of God sacrificed for the sins of the world. His crucifixion provided the greatest demonstration of both the love and the wrath of God that will ever be known.

## The Problem of Apparent Errors

Almost all of the so-called contradictions in the Bible are due to differences in the perspective of the biblical writers when there is more than one account of a particular event. Close examination consistently reveals that the accounts supplement one another and that they can be harmonized. We see this in the alleged discrepancy in the gospels concerning the number of angels at Jesus' tomb. Matthew and Mark report that one was there, but Luke and John speak of two. But if two angels were there, certainly one was there, and the one mentioned by Matthew and Mark was evidently more prominent. This is an example of selective reporting (all reporting is selective), and the same thing happens in other places (e.g., Mark and Luke mention only one demoniac who met Jesus near Gadara, but Matthew mentions two).

Another favorite example of a biblical contradiction relates to Genesis 1 and 2. Some claim these are two contradictory creation accounts, but they can be harmonized when we notice two things:

- Genesis 1 is a general survey of the six days of creation, and Genesis 2 is a more detailed account of the sixth day of creation.
- The name Elohim is used consistently in Genesis 1, because it emphasizes God's work as Creator, while the name Yahweh is used throughout Genesis 2 to underline the covenant relationship He establishes with man.

There are three basic causes for apparent errors in the Bible: sources, text, and interpretation.

1. The biblical and extrabiblical sources are incomplete, and this can lead to the appearance of error. The section above on archaeology and the Bible illustrates how the Bible appeared to be in error regarding such things as the Hittite empire, Belshazzar as king of Babylon, and the Philistines in the patriarchal period. Until these biblical statements were confirmed by archaeological discoveries, it appeared that the Bible was in error. The problems were caused by incomplete sources, not biblical deficiency.
2. Errors have crept into the biblical text through scribal mistakes and modernization. For example, 1 Kings 4:26 states that "Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots," but 2 Chronicles 9:25 says that "Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots." The exaggerated figure in 1 Kings is a common type of scribal error due to similarity in numerical notation (also compare 2 Sam. 10:18 with 1 Chron. 19:18).
3. Faulty interpretation of the biblical text and extrabiblical data can also cause the appearance of error. The King James Version of 2 Kings 23:29, for example wrongly interpreted the Hebrew text to mean that Pharaoh Neco of Egypt "went up against" the king of Assyria. The text simply says "went up to," and this agrees with the Assyrian records which say that he went up to aid the Assyrians against the Babylonians. (Keep in mind that our English Bibles are direct translations from the original languages. A comparison of several translations often helps one gain a clearer understanding of the text.)

It would be wrong to say that all biblical discrepancies have been resolved, for a small number of problems still remain. But the increasing historical and archaeological evidence has consistently been in favor of the Scriptures, and these problems should continue to diminish.

## The Problem of Miracles

This relates to the problem of science and the Bible because many object to the miracles of the Bible on scientific grounds. One objection is that miracles violate or contradict natural laws. However, it would be more accurate to say that since miracles are empowered by something higher than nature, they supersede the ordinary processes or laws of nature. Just as an airplane flies because the principle of aerodynamics overcomes the law of gravity, so a higher (supernatural) principle overcomes a lower (natural) principle for the duration of the miracle. Another objection is that miracles would destroy the regularity of nature. The scientific method is built upon the assumption that we live in an orderly universe. But if divine interventions can take place at any time, anything can happen, and order is replaced by confusion. This objection is based on a misunderstanding of the biblical teaching on miracles. The Bible affirms that the universe is orderly because it has been created and sustained by an intelligent Designer. God has instituted what we call the laws of nature, but He is not bound by them. He sometimes chooses to supersede them in order to reveal something about Himself to man. An examination of the Bible, however, shows that these sovereign interventions or miracles are unusual, not commonplace events. In fact, a miracle by its very nature must be a unique event that stands out against a background of ordinary and regular occurrences. Thus, it is just as devastating to the concept of miracles to believe that we are surrounded by them as to say that there are no such things. Because miracles are accomplished by a supernatural agency, there is no natural explanation for how they happen. But our inability to explain them certainly does not mean, therefore, that they cannot take place. The real issue is whether God exists. If so, miracles are possible. Granted the existence of God, the issue is not scientific or philosophical (can miracles happen?), but historical (have miracles happened?).

The best historical evidence for miracles is the work of Jesus Christ, especially the miracle of His resurrection from the dead. All the attempts to find naturalistic explanations for the historical facts related to the resurrection have failed. The direct evidence concerning the tomb and the appearances, combined with the circumstantial evidence like the changed lives of the disciples, make a strong case for the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Scriptures do not give us details about how God caused the ten plagues to ravage Egypt, nor do they tell us how Jesus turned the water into wine or how He raised the dead. But it is clear that a supernatural agency was involved, and if God created the universe, He is certainly capable of accomplishing these things in the enactment of His redemptive purpose. Thus God could easily appoint a sea creature and arrange to have it near the ship at the time Jonah was thrown into the Mediterranean Sea. There is no basis or need to allegorize the account of Jonah. Certain whales and sharks are capable of swallowing a man whole, and a few people have actually had such an experience and lived to tell about it. (James Bartley, for example, was removed alive from the gullet of a sperm whale in 1891 a day and a half after being swallowed. The whale had overturned Bartley's harpooning boat and his shipmates presumed he had drowned.) Whether God used an existing creature or created a new one for the purpose of delivering His prophet Jonah is irrelevant, for God has the power to do both.

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## Theological Word

**Grace:** Receiving something we don't deserve (eternal life)

**Mercy:** Not receiving something that we do deserve (hell)





