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Barnabas, Gospel of. Muslims often cite *The Gospel of Barnabas* in defense of Islamic teaching (see MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED DIVINE CALL OF ; QUR'AN, ALLEGED DIVINE ORIGIN OF). In fact, it is a best-seller in many Muslim countries. Suzanne Haneef, in her annotated bibliography on Islam, highly recommends it, saying, "Within it one finds the living Jesus portrayed far more vividly and in character with the mission with which he was entrusted than any other of the four New Testament Gospels has been able to portray him." It is called "essential reading for any seeker of the truth" (Haneef, 186).

Typical of Muslim claims is that of Muhammad Ata ur-Rahim: "The Gospel of Barnabas is the only known surviving Gospel written by a disciple of Jesus. . . . [It] was accepted as a Canonical Gospel in the churches of Alexandria up until 325 A.D ." (Ata ur-Rahim, 41). Another Muslim author, M. A. Yusseff, argues confidently that "in antiquity and authenticity, no other gospel can come close to *The Gospel of Barnabas* " (Yusseff, 5).

The Contents of the Gospel. It is not surprising that Muslim apologists appeal to the *Gospel of Barnabas* in that it supports a central Islamic teaching in contrast to the New Testament (see CHRIST, DEATH OF). It claims that Jesus did not die on the cross (cf. sura 4:157; see CHRIST'S DEATH, SUBSTITUTION LEGEND). Rather, it argues that Judas Iscariot died in Jesus' stead (sect. 217), having been substituted for him at the last minute. This view has been adopted by many Muslims, since the vast majority of them believe that someone else was substituted on the cross for Jesus.

Authenticity of the Gospel. Reputable scholars who have carefully examined it find absolutely no basis for this writing's authenticity. After reviewing the evidence in a scholarly article in *Islamochristiana*, J. Slomp concluded: "in my opinion scholarly research has proved absolutely that this 'gospel' is a fake. This opinion is also held by a number of Muslim scholars" (Slomp, 68). In their introduction to the Oxford edition of *The Gospel of Barnabas*, Longsdale and Ragg conclude that "the true date lies . . . nearer to the sixteenth century than to the first" (Longsdale, 37).

The evidence that this was not a first-century gospel, written by a disciple of Christ, is overwhelming:

The earliest reference to it comes from a fifth-century work, *Decretum Gelasianum* (Gelasian Decree, by Pope Gelasius, A.D . 492–495). But even this reference is in doubt (Slomp, 74). Moreover, there is no original language manuscript evidence for its existence. Slomp says flatly, "There is no text tradition whatsoever of the G.B.V. [Gospel of Barnabas Vienna manuscript]" (ibid.). By contrast, the New Testament books are verified by more than 5300 Greek manuscripts that begin over the first three centuries (see BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR).

Second, L. Bevan Jones notes that "the earliest form of it known to us is in an Italian manuscript. This has been closely analyzed by scholars and is judged to belong to the fifteenth or sixteenth century, that is, 1400 years after the time of Barnabas" (Jones, 79). Even Muslim defenders of it, like Muhammad ur-Rahim, admit that they have no manuscripts from before the 1500s.

This gospel is widely used by Muslim apologists today, yet there is no reference to it by any Muslim writer before the fifteenth or sixteenth century. Surely they would have used it had it been in existence. There were many Muslim writers who wrote books who would no doubt have referred to such a work, had it been in existence. But not one of them, or anyone else, ever refers to it between the seventh and fifteenth centuries, when Muslims and Christians were in heated debate.

No father or teacher of the Christian church ever quoted it from the first to the fifteenth centuries, despite the fact that they quoted every verse of every book of the New Testament except 11 (Geisler, *General Introduction to the Bible*). If *The Gospel of Barnabas* had been considered authentic, it more surely would have been cited many times, as were all the other canonical books of Scripture. Had this gospel even been in existence, authentic or not, certainly it would have been cited by someone. But no father cited it, either pro or con, for over 1500 years.

Sometimes it is confused with the first-century *Epistle of [Pseudo] Barnabas* (ca. A.D . 70–90), which is an entirely different book (Slomp, 37–38). Because of references to this volume, Muslim scholars falsely allege support for an early date. Muhammad Ata ur-Rahim confuses the two books and so wrongly claims that the gospel was in circulation in the second and third centuries A.D . This is a strange error since he admits that they are listed as different books in the "Sixty Books" as Serial No. 18 Epistle of Barnabas and Serial No. 24 Gospel of Barnabas. Rahim even cites by name the "Epistle of Barnabas" as evidence of the existence of the *Gospel of Barnabas* (Ata ur-Rahim, 42–43).

Some have mistakenly assumed that the reference to a gospel used by Barnabas referred to in the *Apocrypha* 1 *Acts of Barnabas* (pre-478) was *The Gospel of Barnabas* . However, this is clearly false, as the quotation reveals: "Barnabas, having unrolled the Gospel, *which we have received from Matthew his fellow-labourer*, began to teach the Jews" (Slomp, 110). By deliberately omitting this emphasized phrase, the impression is given that there is a *Gospel of Barnabas* .

The message of the *Gospel of Barnabas* is completely refuted by eyewitness first-century documents of the New Testament (see NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF). For example, its

teaching that Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah and that he did not die on the cross are thoroughly refuted by eyewitness first-century documents (see BIBLE MANUSCRIPTS). In fact, no Muslim should accept the authenticity of *The Gospel of Barnabas* since it clearly contradicts the *Qur'an's* claim that Jesus was the Messiah. It claims, “Jesus confessed, and said the truth; ‘I am not the Messiah. . . . I am indeed sent to the house of Israel as a prophet of salvation; but after me shall come the Messiah’ ” (sects. 42, 48). The *Qur'an* repeatedly calls Jesus the “Messiah” [the “Christ”] (cf. suras 5:19, 75).

Even the book’s Muslim promoters, such as Haneef, have to admit that “the authenticity of this book has not been unquestionably established. . . . It is believed to be an *Apocrypha* 1 account of the life of Jesus.” Haneef claims it was “lost to the world for centuries due to its suppression as a heretical document,” but there is not a shred of documented evidence for this. As noted, it was not even mentioned by anyone before it in the sixth century. Other Muslim scholars doubt its authenticity too (see Slomp, 68). For the book contains anachronisms and descriptions of medieval life in western Europe that reveal that it was not written before the fourteenth century. For example, it refers to the year of Jubilee coming every 100 years, instead of fifty (*The Gospel of Barnabas* , 82). The papal declaration to change it to every 100 years was made by the church in 1343. John Gilchrist in his work titled, *Origins and Sources of the Gospel of Barnabas*, concludes that “only one solution can account for this remarkable coincidence. The author of the Gospel of Barnabas only quoted Jesus as speaking of the jubilee year as coming ‘every hundred years’ because he knew of the decree of Pope Boniface.” He added, “but how could he know of this decree unless he lived at the same time as the Pope or sometime afterwards? This is a clear anachronism which compels us to conclude that the Gospel of Barnabas could not have been written earlier than the fourteenth century after Christ” (Gilchrist, 16–17). One significant anachronism is that *The Gospel of Barnabas* uses the text from the fourth-century Roman Catholic Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible. Other examples of anachronisms include a vassal who owes a share of his crop to his lord (*The Gospel of Barnabas*, 122), an illustration of medieval feudalism, a reference to wooden wine casks (152), rather than wine skins as were used in Palestine, and a medieval court procedure (121).

J. Jomier provides a list of mistakes and exaggerations:

The writing says that Jesus was born when Pilate was governor, though he did not become governor until A . D 26 or 27. Jesus sailed to Nazareth, though it was not on the sea shore. Likewise, *the Gospel of Barnabas* contains exaggerations, such as mention of 144,000 prophets and 10,000 prophets being slain “by Jizebel” (see Slomp).

Jomier’s study shows fourteen Islamic elements throughout the text that prove that a Muslim author, probably a convert, worked on the book. The pinnacle of the temple, where Jesus is said to have preached—hardly a good place—was translated into Arabic by *dikka*, a platform used in mosques (7). Also, Jesus is represented as coming only for Israel but Muhammad “for the salvation of the whole world” (chap. 11). Finally, the denial of Jesus to be the Son of God is *Qur’anic*, as is the fact that Jesus’ sermon is modeled after a Muslim *hutba* which begins with praising God and his holy Prophet (chap. 12).

Conclusion. Muslim use of *The Gospel of Barnabas* to support their teaching is devoid of evidence. Its teachings even contradict the *Qur’an* . This work, far from being an authentic first-century account of the facts about Jesus, is patently a late medieval fabrication. The best first-century records we have of the life of Christ are found in the New Testament, which categorically contradicts the teaching of the *Gospel of Barnabas* . Even early non-Christian references contradict the Gospel of Barnabas in key points (see NEW TESTAMENT, NON-CHRISTIAN SOURCES). For a further critique the reader should consult David Sox’s excellent book, *The Gospel of Barnabas* .

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Barth, Karl. Karl Barth (1886–1968) was a German theologian who studied at Berne, Berlin, Tübingen, and Marburg. He ministered at Geneva from 1901 to 1911. After a ten-year pastorate at Safenwil, Switzerland, Barth was appointed to the chair of Reformed theology at the University of Göttingen (1921). In 1925 he went to Münster and later to Bonn (1929) where his opposition to the German National Socialist movement led to his exile. He then taught theology at the University of Basel until his retirement in 1962.

Barth’s most influential works include *Commentary on Romans* (1919; rev. 1922), *The Word of God and Theology* (1924; tr. 1928), *Theology and the Church* (1928), *Christian Dogmatics in Outline* (1927), *Anselm* (1931), and *Church Dogmatics* (1932–68). He also wrote a small but significant work of apologetics, *Nein* (*No*).

Influences. Barth drew on the epistemology of Immanuel Kant by way of Albrecht Ritschl and Wilhelm Herrmann. The existentialism of Søren Kierkegaard also had significant impact on his thinking, though he disavowed that influence later. Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *The Brothers Karamazov* , a novel that portrayed the bankruptcy of human-centered philosophy, helped mold his thinking.

Barth was also influenced by the liberal theological method of Herrmann, the atheism of Franz Overbeck, and the pietism of Jean Blumhardt, an early-nineteenth-century pastor. Barth himself would point to his reading of the Bible, especially Romans, and the Reformers as transforming influences on his life and thought (see Barth, *Romans* ; unless otherwise noted, citations in this article are from Barth's writings).

Barth was also strongly influenced negatively by the human-centered atheism of Ludwig Feuerbach . He even wrote a foreword for an edition of Feuerbach's *The Essence of Christianity* . He seemed to affirm that an anthropomorphic religion is the best human beings can do apart from divine revelation.

Elements of Barth's Thought. Barth was a student of liberalism who reacted strongly against liberal teachings. He stressed the transcendence of God and the domination of sin in the world in opposition to the modernist tendency to put humanity in the place of God. He developed a dialectical theological method that poses truth as a series of paradoxes. For example, the infinite became finite, the absolutely transcendent disclosed himself in Jesus. He also developed a theme of "crisis," describing the struggle with these paradoxes

Fideism . As a pastor at Safenwil, Barth became disillusioned with liberalism in the face of the practical concerns of Christian preaching. For Barth, truth in religion is based on faith rather than on reason or evidence (*Church Dogmatics* , 1.2.17). This is fideism. Barth held that transcendental truth cannot be expressed in rational categories. It needs to be made known in the clash of opposites. Theological knowledge is an internal rationality, an inner consistency within the presuppositions of faith. This knowledge is independent of the rules of thought that govern other knowledge.

The apex of Barth's fideism was reached in *Anselm* and continued in *Church Dogmatics* . Only God can make God known. Faith needs no proofs. The Word of God becomes knowable by making itself knowable (Anselm, 282). So strong was this fideism that Barth wrote *Nein* (No) to respond to another neoorthodox theologian, Emil Brunner. Barth denied that human beings even have an active capacity to receive special revelation from God (*see* REVELATION, SPECIAL). Rather, God has to miraculously create the "contact point" within the person before they can communicate (*Nein* , 29). Of course, he denied the efficacy of general revelation (*see* REVELATION, GENERAL) to convey truth of God (ibid., 79–85). Humanity is so totally vitiated by sin that revelation cannot be understood (*see* FAITH AND REASON ; NOETIC EFFECTS OF SIN).

Natural theology , which seeks to establish God's existence by rational arguments (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR), is simply ruled out (*Romans* , 2.1.168). Miracles do not confirm revelation to unbelievers. They are meaningful only to those who already believe (ibid., 3.3.2; 714f.; *see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF). In his *Shorter Commentary on Romans* (1959) Barth acknowledged that there is a witness of God in nature to which all people have access, but he hastens to add that they have not profited by it (*Shorter Commentary* , 28).

Barth's View of Scripture. *Three Levels of the Word of God.* The Word of God is revealed in three forms: (1) The incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, is the ultimate level, which is identical with the second person of the Trinity. (2) The inscripturated Word is the whole canon of Scripture as a

witness to revelation. (3) The proclaimed (preached) Word depends on the written Word, because it is based upon this witness to revelation.

The Bible as Record of Revelation. The Bible is not a written revelation (*Church Dogmatics* , 6.1.5–7). It merely records the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The proclaimed Word looks forward to the fulfillment of God's Word in the future. Only that revealed Word, the incarnate Christ, has the absolute character of the Word of God. The other two are relative to the first and can only be properly labeled "Word of God" to the extent that God freely chooses to use these to confront us.

Barth was convinced that the Holy Scripture is not itself revelation, but is rather a *witness* of revelation. There is a difference between an event and its record and description. Hence, the revelation of God and the human description of it are never identical.

The Bible is fallible. The Bible is not the infallible words of God, but a thoroughly human book. The writers of the Bible were time-bound children who possessed their own perspective, which is unlike ours. They witnessed the redemptive events according to the concepts of their time. The writers erred in every word, but their work was justified and sanctified by God so that they spoke God's Word with their fallible and erring words. God's Word never coincides with the book (Bible) itself. The Word is always a free, sovereign act of God. This removes the words of the Bible from the Word of God, so that the Word of God is not subject to attacks leveled against the words of the Bible.

The Bible is a gateway. God uses this Bible for his service by taking the human text and encountering the individual through and in it. The authority of the Bible and its divine character are not subject to human demonstration. It is only when God, by the Holy Spirit, speaks through the Bible that a person hears the Word of God. The Bible consists of sixty-six canonical books recognized in the church, not because the church confers on them a special authority, but because they embody the record of those who witnessed (personal) revelation in its original form (Christ).

God's Word is always the Word of God, but it is not at our disposal. The dictum, "The Bible is the Word of God," does not refer to the book as such, but to God's being at work within the book. Inspiration does not vouchsafe the grammatical, historical, and theological character of the words on the page; it uses them as a gateway.

All likeness between God's Word and the Bible is lacking, and everything stands in opposition and in contradiction with the real Word of God. It is not an infallible revelation but a fallible record of God's revelation in Christ. It may be said that the Bible *becomes* the Word of God, if and when God is pleased to speak through it.

Religious Language. Barth strongly opposed analogous religious language. There is no analogy of being, as in Thomas Aquinas. There is only an analogy of faith. This means that the language of the Bible does not describe the way God really is. God so transcends our language about himself that it is equivocal as applied to him. It is evocative, but not descriptive.

The Resurrection. His deviation from an orthodox view of Scripture notwithstanding, Barth held some conservative views. Inconsistently to his view of Scripture, he accepted the virgin birth, miracles, and bodily resurrection. He confessed an orthodox Trinity and a Christ who is God.

On the resurrection, Barth affirmed, “The Easter story actually speaks of . . . Christ truly, corporeally risen, and as such appearing to his disciples” (*Commentary* , 1.2.114f.). In *Credo* , his commentary on the Apostles’ Creed, he added: “The miracle [of the resurrection] consists in the two facts that belong together . . .—the one, that the grave of that Jesus who died on the Cross on Good Friday was found empty on the third day, the other that Jesus Himself ‘appears’ . . . to His disciples as visibly, audibly, tangibly alive.” Barth emphasized the “corporeally risen” and adds that “there cannot be any talk of striking out the empty grave” (*Credo* , 100).

In his work on *The Resurrection of the Dead* (tr. 1977), Barth adds, “the tomb is doubtless empty, under every conceivable circumstance empty! ‘He is not here.’ ” Further, “It is an event which involves a definite seeing with the eyes and hearing with the ears and handling with the hands . . . It involves real eating and drinking, speaking and answering, reasoning and doubting and then believing.” The event “is fixed and characterized as something which actually happened among men like other events, and was experienced and later attested by them” (*Commentary* , 2.64.143).

Barth goes so far as to refute those who stress a “glorified corporeality” by making certain speculative inferences from the fact that Jesus was not always immediately recognized after his resurrection and that he appeared through closed doors. Barth replies, “What the Evangelists really know and say is simply that the disciples saw and heard Jesus again after His death, and that as they saw and heard Him they recognized Him, and they recognized Him on the basis of His identity with the One whom they had known before.” Indeed, “in the ensuing appearances to the eleven, recognition comes when He allows them to see and touch His hands and His feet” (ibid.).

Evaluation. Positive Features. From the viewpoint of orthodox Christians, Barth is a mixed blessing. Among helpful dimensions of his thought are:

1. his attempt to reject modernism and liberalism;
2. his identification of the modernist’s effort to put humanity in God’s place;
3. his rejection of efforts to make God totally immanent;
4. his stress on a bodily resurrection;
5. his emphasis on calling the church back to the Bible, with the understanding that faith is not ultimately directed to the book, but to God alone, and
6. his support for central orthodox doctrines.

Criticisms. God is out of reach. Barth is a classic example of a fideist. In overemphasizing God’s transcendence, Barth effectively makes God unknowable. He never overcame the “wholly other” form of his paradox, which will not stand alongside the revealed Son of God of the Christ (*Commentary*). Barth’s God is the God of Kierkegaard. If language about God is not even analogical, all that is left is agnosticism about God’s nature.

The central thesis is self-defeating. The idea that transcendental truth cannot be expressed in rational categories does the very thing it denies—it expresses transcendental truth in rational categories. To propose that “truth is a series of paradoxes” raises the question of whether this statement is true, and, if so, whether it is paradoxical.

Fideism is unfounded. To argue that there are no rational supports for the Christian faith is self-destructive. It is an argument in support of a religious position claiming that arguments cannot be given in support of religious positions. Further, fideism may be internally consistent, but there is no indication of where it touches reality, so it is impossible to distinguish from falsehood.

The denial of general revelation is unbiblical. When Barth denied the validity of general revelation he went contrary to both historical Christianity and Scripture. Romans 1:19–20 (cf. 2:12–15) declares that general revelation in nature is so clear that even fallen human beings are “without excuse.” Other passages demonstrate that God can be known by general revelation, among them Psalm 119 and Acts 14 and 17.

This view of Scripture is faulty. There are serious problems with Barth’s view of Scripture. In attempting to preserve God’s freedom about whether to speak through Scripture, he has undermined the essential nature of Scripture and the authoritative Word of God. His view is contrary to what the Bible affirms of itself (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR), namely, that it is not merely a witness to revelation but a revelation itself (*see* BIBLE, INSPIRATION OF).

The focus of divine revelation according to Scripture is not a self-authenticating word, but an open, public, verifiable historical event. Evidence is made known to all (Acts 17:31). Luke composed his work to show the historical foundations on which the proclamation of the gospel rests (Luke 1:1–4). Jesus offered infallible proofs (Acts 1:3).

This defective view of Scripture allows virtually no limits to picking and choosing what to believe. Barth may have accepted a literal physical resurrection, but many of those who followed him did not. He accepted such unorthodox beliefs of universalism. Following Origen , Barth denied the existence of hell and affirmed that all will be saved.

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Bayle, Pierre. Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) was born in Carla, France, where his father was a Calvinist clergyman. He attended the Jesuit University of Toulouse in 1669 where he converted to Catholicism. After reconsidering, he returned to Protestantism and became subject to severe penalties under French law. He thus left France for Geneva to finish his studies. He was appointed to the chair of philosophy at Sedan (1675) and later in Rotterdam (1682) where he published his *Pensees diverses sur la comete de 1680* (Diverse Thoughts on the Comet of 1680) and his *Critique generale de l’Histoire du Calvinisme de M. Maimbourg* (A Critique of Maimbourg’s History of Calvinism). Both his father and his brothers died in France as a result of religious persecutions. From 1684 to 1687 he published his famous journal, *Nouvelles de la republique des lettres*, an attempt to popularize literature. After being deposed from his chair in 1693, he devoted his attention to his famous *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (2 vols., 1697) which was eventually expanded to sixteen volumes by the eleventh edition (1829–24). The English translation was five volumes (1734–38).

Beliefs. Since Bayle lived in a day of religious intolerance, his views were more covert than they otherwise may have been. Nevertheless, some things emerge clearly.

Skepticism. After the publication of his *Dictionary*, Bayle was charged with skepticism, Manichaeism, and disregard for Holy Scripture. Bayle was called before a Presbyterian commission and consented to change some offensive articles, which appeared in revised form in the second edition. Nonetheless, it is evident that Bayle was far from being an orthodox Protestant.

In fact, Bayle was a skeptic who strongly objected to Benedict Spinoza’s monism and leaned toward Manichaean dualism—the system out of which Augustine was converted. Bayle held

that the realms of faith and reason are mutually exclusive. At first Protestant liberals believed Bayle was on their side, but they soon learned that he considered Christian beliefs incompatible with reason and science.

Attack on Religion. Bayle’s attack on religion was relentless, though often subtle. Many of his articles in the *Dictionary* dealt with the problem of evil, immorality in the Old Testament, and the alleged irrationality of Christianity. He reveled in salacious tales about famous religious figures. Indeed, his articles were “a massive onslaught against almost any religious, philosophical, moral, scientific, or historical view that anyone held” (Edwards, 258). He considered himself “a Protestant in the true sense of the term, that he opposed everything that was said and everything that was done” (ibid.).

Religious Toleration. Bayle believed that “matters of belief should be outside the sphere of the State”—a belief that earned his work a place on the Catholic Index. In 1686 he published a *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jesus-Christ ‘Constrains-les de’ enter’* (*Philosophical Commentary on the Words of Jesus ‘Constrain Them to Come In’*) in which he defended toleration for Jews, Muslims, Unitarians, Catholics, and even atheists.

Influence. Although he was not himself a revolutionary, his writings did pave the way for the French Revolution. Three years before John Locke (1632–1704) wrote his famous *Letters on Toleration*, Bayle penned his *Commentaire philosophique sur le Compelle Entrare* in which he argued that freedom is a natural right and that even an atheist was not necessarily a bad citizen.

Bayle had a great influence on French philosophers of the eighteenth century, especially François-Marie Voltaire (1694–1778). Bayle’s *Dictionary* was the source from which they drew many of their arguments. Denis Diderot’s skeptic *Encyclopedie* was based on Bayle’s work. Diderot (1713–1784) wrote: “Articles dealing with respectable prejudices must expound them differentially; the edifice of clay must be shattered by referring the reader to the other articles in which the opposite truths are established on sound principles” (“Diderot, Denis,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*).

The influence of Bayle extended to figures like David Hume and Edward Gibbon. Thomas Jefferson recommended the *Dictionary* as one of the hundred basic books with which to start the Congressional Library. The famous German atheist Ludwig Feuerbach viewed Bayle as a major figure in modern thought and devoted a whole volume to him (*see* FEUERBACH).

The central theses of Bayle’s skepticism are treated elsewhere, particularly in articles on Agnosticism; Apologetics; Biblical Criticism; Hume, David; Miracles; and New Testament, Reliability of.

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Berkeley, George. Bishop George Berkeley (1685–1753) was born in Kilekenny, Ireland. He studied John Locke and Rene Descartes at Trinity College, Dublin. He attempted but failed to start a college in Rhode Island. Having been ordained as an Anglican priest in 1707, he was eventually appointed bishop in 1734.

The primary philosophical writings of Berkeley include *A Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge* (1710), *Three Dialogues Between Hylas and Philonous* (1713), and *The Analyst; or, A Discourse Addressed to an Infidel Mathematician* (1734).

The Philosophy of Berkeley. Berkeley is known for two seemingly incongruous positions. He was an epistemological empiricist in the tradition of John Locke. He was also a metaphysical idealist who denied the existence of matter.

The Epistemology of Empiricism. According to Berkeley, the cause and cure of philosophical difficulties lies not in our senses or reason but in the philosophical principle of *abstraction*. We can imagine, compound, divide, and symbolize (generalize) and no more. General ideas are only particular ones made to stand for a group (e.g., a triangle).

The error of abstraction arises from language; we wrongly believe words have precise meanings, that every word stands for an idea or that language is primarily for communication. It also arouses passions and influences attitudes. The cure is to confine thoughts to naked ideas that are free from their traditional names, so as to avoid purely verbal controversies, to avoid the snare of abstractions, and to be clear. The result of this is that we won't look for abstract when particular is known, nor will we assume that all names represent an idea.

Berkeley believed that the *source* of all ideas is internal—sensation, perception, memory, and imagination. The *subject* of all knowledge is a perceiver (the mind or “me”). The *nature* of ideas is that they are passive objects of perception. The *results* of all this is metaphysics idealism.

The Metaphysics of Idealism. Berkeley accepted the existence of only minds and ideas. To be is either to perceive (*esse is percipere*) or to be perceived (*esse is percipi*). No “matter” or extramental beings exist: (1) There is no way to separate *being* from *being perceived*. (2) The arguments against existence of secondary qualities also apply to primary ones. For example, extension cannot be known apart from color and bulk. Number is based on unity, which cannot be perceived. Figure changes with perspective. Motion is relative. (3) “Things” cannot be known apart from thought; they exist only in thought. (4) Belief in “matter” charges God with a useless creation (see WILLIAM OF OCKHAM). It is impossible to conceive of anything existing outside of a mind. To do so is a power of mind to form an idea in the mind (not outside of it). Nothing can be conceived as existing unconceived.

Proof for God. Besides being an epistemological empiricist and a metaphysical idealist, Berkeley was a Christian theist (see THEISM). He even offered a proof for God's existence (see GOD, EVIDENCES FOR).

1. All ideas are passive objects of perception. (a) Minds perceive, but (b) Ideas are only perceived.
2. I am receiving a strong, steady succession of ideas coming from outside me, forced upon me, and over which I have no control. What I call “world” so does everyone else.
3. Therefore, there must be a Mind (God), an active Spirit causing the “world” of ideas I and others receive from outside our minds.
4. We do not directly perceive this Mind, but only its effects, the ideas it causes.

Answers to Objections. Berkeley anticipated and offered responses to many objections, though not all are plausible.

For the argument that his view does away with nature, Berkeley responds that nature is a set of rules by which God regularly excites ideas in our minds. To the assertion that substance has no meaning, he answers that it is only an idea gained from a group of sensations. Though some might insist that it sounds harsh to eat and wear ideas, this is true, but only because it goes against our customary use of words.

As for those who contend that distant objects are not in the mind, he replied that they are in our dreams if nowhere else. Further, the *sight* of a distant object is the prognostication that I may soon *feel* it hit me. Though it be objected that fire differs from the idea of fire, Berkeley reminded us that Plato did not see that difference. Even so, other universal beliefs have been false. All may *act* as if there is matter, even though it is philosophically untrue. The general objection that ideas and things differ was met with the response that this is true only because the former is a passive idea and the latter is an active idea (activated by God). Does this view destroy the concept of motion? Not so. Motion is reducible to sense phenomena (ideas). Berkeley responded to the argument that things not thought about would cease to exist. God is always thinking them. This latter response occasioned the famous response by John Knox: “A Poem on Berkeley.”

There was a young man who said, “God

Must think it exceedingly odd

If He finds that this tree

Continues to be

When there's no one about in the Quad.”

Dear Sir: Your astonishment's odd:

I am always about in the Quad.

And that is why the tree

Will continue to be

Since observed by Yours faithfully, God.

It could be argued against Berkeley that this would make everything a direct result of God or else artificial. He believed this was not true. There are secondary causes—ideas combined into regular patterns (nature) for the practical purposes of life. Fire warns of potential pain, but it doesn't cause it.

Since the Bible speaks of physical bodies, Berkeley was charged with denying the teaching of the Bible. His answer was that what we call "body" is merely a collection of sense impressions, but not really a material thing. To the insistence that his view was a denial of miracles, Berkeley responded that things are not real, but they are real perceptions. Thus the disciples really perceived they were touching the resurrected body of Christ, though it was not made of matter in the way we usually think (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR).

The Values of Idealism. Bishop Berkeley enumerated positive values of his philosophical idealism. For one, the source of skepticism (*see* AGNOSTICISM) is gone. How can we know ideas correspond to reality? This is no problem; since ideas *are* real they do not have to correspond to anything else. The cornerstone of atheism is gone as well—matter. It is matter in motion eternally that atheists use to eliminate the idea of God.

The basis for idolatry is eliminated. Who could worship the mere idea of an object in their mind? The Socinians lose their objection to the resurrection, since there are no particulars to be resurrected (*see* RESURRECTION, OBJECTIONS TO).

Evaluation. Although Berkeley was a Christian theist in the classical tradition, his metaphysical ideas have caused great discomfort to other theists. Rather than solve problems, it seems to create them. Several criticisms should be noted:

His Basic Assumption Begs the Question. The fundamental assumption of Berkeley's idealism is that only minds and ideas exist. Once this is granted, everything else follows. But there is no compelling reason to grant it. Indeed, it begs the question by assuming that *only* minds and ideas exist. No surprise that he concludes that nothing exists beyond minds and ideas. The existence of extramental and nonmental reality is not eliminated by any of Berkeley's arguments.

His Basic Arguments Fail. Berkeley's arguments for idealism are at root based on the mistaken notion that knowing involves a sensing *of* ideas rather than sensing things *through* ideas. But this begs the question. If ideas are not the *formal* object of knowledge, but really the *instrument of* knowledge, then Berkeley's view collapses.

His Ingenious Solutions Are Contrary to Experience. To speak of bodies, matter, and nature we all experience as mere ideas that God regularly excites in us is clever but counter-intuitive. It

is possible, but not credible. Indeed, it *is harsh* to speak of eating ideas. It *does undermine the resurrection* to affirm that God merely raised up a cluster of ideas.

His View Charges God with Deception. Indeed, Berkeley appears to charge God with deception (*see* GOD, NATURE OF ; MORAL ARGUMENT). If it is simply a matter of God's power, there is no question but that God can excite the idea of matter in our minds without matter actually existing. But it is not simply a matter of power. God is more than all powerful. He is all perfect. He cannot deceive. But exciting in us regularly the idea of an extramental world when there is no word out there is deception.

Sources

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Bible, Alleged Errors in. Critics claim the Bible is filled with errors. Some even speak of thousands of mistakes. However, orthodox Christians through the ages have claimed that the Bible is without error in the original text ("autographs"; see Geisler, *Decide for Yourself*). "If we are perplexed by any apparent contradiction in Scripture," Augustine wisely noted, "it is not allowable to say, 'The author of this book is mistaken'; but either the manuscript is faulty, or the translation is wrong, or you have not understood" (Augustine, 11.5). Not one error that extends to the original text of the Bible has ever been demonstrated.

Why the Bible Cannot Err. The argument for an errorless (inerrant) Bible can be put in this logical form:

God cannot err.

The Bible is the Word of God.

Therefore, the Bible cannot err.

God Cannot Err. Logically, the argument is valid. So, if the premises are true, the conclusion is also true. If the theistic God exists (*see* GOD, EVIDENCE FOR ; THEISM), then the first premise is true. For an infinitely perfect, all-knowing God cannot make a mistake. The Scriptures testify to this, declaring emphatically that "it is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18). Paul speaks of the "God who does not lie" (Titus 1:2). He is a God who, even if we are faithless, "remains faithful; he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:13). God is truth (John 14:6), and so is his word. Jesus said to the Father, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). The psalmist exclaimed, "The entirety of Your word is truth" (Ps. 119:160).

The Bible Is the Word of God. Jesus, who is the Son of God (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF) referred to the Old Testament as the “Word of God” which “cannot be broken” (John 10:35). He said, “until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matt. 5:18). Paul added, “All Scripture is God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16). It came “out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Although human authors recorded the messages, “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 Peter 1:20).

Jesus said to the religious leaders of his day, “You nullify the word of God by your tradition” (Mark 7:13). Jesus turned their attention to the written Word of God by affirming over and over again, “It is written” (for example, Matt. 4:4 , 7 , 10). This phrase occurs more than ninety times in the New Testament, a strong indication of divine authority. Stressing the unfailing nature of God’s truth, the apostle Paul referred to the Scriptures as “the word of God” (Rom. 9:6). The writer of Hebrews declared that “the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

Therefore, the Bible Cannot Err. If God cannot err and if the Bible is the Word of God, then the Bible cannot err (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR). God has spoken, and he has not stuttered. The God of truth has given us the Word of truth, and it does not contain any untruth. The Bible is the unerring Word of God. This is not to say that there are not *difficulties* in our Bibles. There are, or such books as this would be unneeded. But God’s people can approach difficult texts with confidence, knowing that they are not actual *errors* ; God did not err.

Errors in Science and History? Some have suggested that Scripture can always be trusted on matters of faith and life, or moral matters, but it is not always correct on historical matters. They rely on it in the spiritual domain, but not in the sphere of science (*see* SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE). If true, this would render the Bible ineffective as a divine authority, since the historical and scientific is inextricably interwoven with the spiritual.

A close examination of Scripture reveals that the scientific (factual) and spiritual truths of Scripture are often inseparable. One cannot separate the spiritual truth of Christ’s resurrection from the fact that his body permanently and physically vacated the tomb and walked among people (Matt. 28:6 ; 1 Cor. 15:13–19). If Jesus was not born of a biological virgin, then he is no different from the rest of the human race, on whom the stigma of Adam’s sin rests (Rom. 5:12). Likewise, the death of Christ for our sins cannot be detached from the literal shedding of his blood on the cross, for “without the shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb. 9:22). Adam’s existence and fall cannot be a myth. If there were no literal Adam and no actual fall, then the spiritual teaching about inherited sin and physical and spiritual death are wrong (Rom. 5:12). Historical reality and the theological doctrine stand or fall together.

Also, the doctrine of the incarnation (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF) is inseparable from the historical truth about Jesus of Nazareth (John 1:1 , 14). Jesus’ moral teaching about marriage was based on his teaching about a literal Adam and Eve who were joined by God in marriage (Matt. 19:4–5). The moral or theological teaching is devoid of meaning apart from the historical or factual event. If one denies that the literal space-time event occurred, then there is no basis for

believing the scriptural doctrine built upon it, or anything else, for all is then untrustworthy (*see* MIRACLES, MYTH AND).

Jesus often directly compared Old Testament events with important spiritual truths. He related his death and resurrection to Jonah and the great fish (Matt. 12:40), his second coming to Noah and the flood (Matt. 24:37–39). Both the occasion and the manner of comparison make it clear that Jesus was affirming the historicity of those Old Testament events. Jesus asserted to Nicodemus, “If I told you earthly things and you do not believe, how shall you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” (John 3:12). The corollary to that statement is that, if the Bible does not speak truthfully about the physical world, it cannot be trusted when it speaks about the spiritual world. The two are intimately related.

Inspiration includes not only all that the Bible explicitly *teaches* , but everything the Bible *touches* . This is true of history, science, or mathematics—whatever the Bible declares is true, whether a major or a minor point. The Bible is God’s Word, and God does not deviate from the truth. All the parts are as true as the whole they comprise.

If Inspired, Then Inerrant. Inerrancy is a logical result of inspiration (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR). *Inerrancy* means “wholly true and without error.” And what God breathes out (inspires) must be wholly true (inerrant). However, it is helpful to specify more clearly what is meant by “truth” and what would constitute an “error” (see Geisler, “The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate”).

Truth is that which corresponds to reality (*see* TRUTH, DEFINITION OF). *Error* is what does not correspond to reality. Nothing mistaken can be true, even if the author intended the true. Otherwise, every sincere utterance ever made is true, even the grossly mistaken.

Some biblical scholars argue that the Bible cannot be inerrant through some faulty reasoning:

1. The Bible is a human book.
2. Humans err.
3. Therefore, the Bible errs.

The error of this reason can be seen from equally erroneous reasoning:

1. Jesus was a human being.
2. Human beings sin.
3. Therefore, Jesus sinned.

One can readily see that this conclusion is wrong. Jesus was “without sin” (Heb. 4:15 ; see also 2 Cor. 5:21 ; 2 Peter 1:19 ; 2 John 2:1 ; 3:3). But, if Jesus never sinned, what is wrong with the

above argument that Jesus is human and humans sin, therefore, Jesus sinned? Where does the logic go astray?

The mistake is to assume that Jesus is *simply* human. Mere human beings sin. But, Jesus was not a *mere* human being. He was also God. Likewise, the Bible is not *merely* a human book; it is also the Word of God. Like Jesus, it has divine elements that negate the statement that anything human errs. They are divine and cannot err. There can no more be an error in God's written Word than there was a sin in God's living Word.

Approaching Bible Difficulties. As Augustine said above, mistakes come not in the revelation of God, but in the misinterpretations of man. Except where scribal errors and extraneous changes crept into textual families over the centuries, all the critics' allegations of error in the Bible are based on errors of their own. Most problems fall into one of the following categories.

Assuming the Unexplained Is Unexplainable. No informed person would claim to be able to fully explain all Bible difficulties. However, it is a mistake for the critic to assume that the explained cannot and will not be explained. When a scientist comes upon an anomaly in nature, he does not give up further scientific exploration. Rather, the unexplained motivates further study. Scientists once could not explain meteors, eclipses, tornadoes, hurricanes, and earthquakes. Until recently, scientists did not know how the bumblebee could fly. All of these mysteries have yielded their secrets to relentless patience. Scientists do not now know how life can grow on thermo-vents in the depths of the sea. But, no scientist throws in the towel and cries "contradiction!"

The true biblical scholar approaches the Bible with the same presumption that there are answers to the thus-far unexplained. When something is encountered for which no explanation is known, the student goes on with research, looking out for the means to discover an answer. There is rational reason for faith that an answer will be found, because most once-unsolvable problems have now been answered by science, textual study, archaeology, linguistics, or another discipline. Critics once proposed that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible, because Moses' culture was preliterate. Now we know that writing had existed thousands of years before Moses (*see* PENTATEUCH, MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP OF).

Critics once believed that Bible references to the Hittite people were totally fictional. Such a people by that name had never existed. Now that the Hittites' national library has been found in Turkey, the skeptics' once-confident assertions seem humorous. Indications from archaeological studies are that similar scoffings about the route and date of the Exodus will soon be silenced. These and many more examples inspire confidence that the biblical difficulties that have not been explained are not mistakes in the Bible.

Assuming the Bible is Guilty of Error unless Proven Innocent. Many critics assume the Bible is wrong until something proves it right. However, like an American citizen charged with an offense, the Bible should be read with at least the same presumption of accuracy given to other literature that claims to be nonfiction. This is the way we approach all human communications. If we did not, life would not be possible. If we assumed that road signs and traffic signals were not

telling the truth, we would probably be dead before we could prove otherwise. If we assumed food packages mislabeled, we would have to open up all cans and packages before buying.

The Bible, like any other book, should be presumed to be telling us what the authors said, experienced, and heard. Negative critics begin with just the opposite presumption. Little wonder they conclude the Bible is riddled with error.

Confusing Interpretations with Revelation. Jesus affirmed that the "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). As an infallible book, the Bible is also irrevocable. Jesus declared, "Truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18 ; cf. Luke 16:17). The Scriptures also have final authority, being the last word on all it discusses (*see* BIBLE, JESUS' VIEW OF). Jesus employed the Bible to resist the tempter (Matt. 4:4 , 7 , 10), to settle doctrinal disputes (Matt. 21:42), and to vindicate his authority (Mark 11:17). Sometimes a biblical teaching rests on a small historical detail (Heb. 7:4-10), a word or phrase (Acts 15:13-17), or the difference between the singular and the plural (Gal. 3:16).

But, while the Bible is infallible, human interpretations are not. Even though God's word is perfect (Ps. 19:7), as long as imperfect human beings exist, there will be misinterpretations of God's Word and false views about his world. In view of this, one should not be hasty in assuming that a currently dominant assumption in science is the final word. Some of yesterday's irrefutable laws are considered errors by today's scientists. So, contradictions between popular opinions in science and widely accepted interpretations of the Bible can be expected. But this falls short of proving there is a real contradiction.

Failure to Understand the Context. The most common mistake of all Bible interpreters, including some critical scholars, is to read a text outside its proper context. As the adage goes, "A text out of context is a pretext." One can prove anything from the Bible by this mistaken procedure. The Bible says, "there is no God" (Ps. 14:1). Of course, the context is: "The fool has said in his heart 'There is no God.' " One may claim that Jesus admonished us "not to resist evil" (Matt. 5:39), but the antiretaliatory context in which he cast this statement must not be ignored. Many read Jesus' statement to "Give to him who asks you," as though one had an obligation to give a gun to a small child. Failure to note that meaning is determined by context is a chief sin of those who find fault with the Bible.

Interpreting the Difficult by the Clear. Some passages are hard to understand or appear to contradict some other part of Scripture. James appears to be saying that salvation is by works (James 2:14-26), whereas Paul teaches that it is by grace. Paul says Christians are "saved by grace through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is a gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Eph. 2:8-9). And, "to him who does not work but believes on him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness" (Rom. 4:5). Also, it "is not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us" (Titus 3:5-6).

A careful reading of all that James says and all that Paul says shows that Paul is speaking about justification *before God* (by faith alone), whereas James is referring to justification *before*

others (who only see what we do). And James and Paul both speak of the fruitfulness that always comes in the life of one who loves God.

A similar example, this time involving Paul, is found in Philippians 2:12. Paul says, “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.” This appears to say salvation is by works. But this is flatly contradicted by the above texts, and a host of other Scriptures. When this difficult statement about “working out our salvation” is understood in the light of clear passages, we can see that it *does not* mean we are saved by works. In fact, what it means is found in the very next verse. We are to work salvation *out* because God’s grace has worked it *in* our hearts. In Paul’s words, “for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

Teaching on an Obscure Passage. Some passages in the Bible are difficult because their meaning is obscure. This is usually because a key word in the text is used only once (or rarely), so it is difficult to know what the author is saying unless it can be inferred from the context. One of the best known passages in the Bible contains a word that appears nowhere else in all existing Greek literature up to the time the New Testament was written. This word appears in what is popularly known as the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 6:11). It is usually translated, “Give us this day our daily bread.” The word in question is the one translated “daily”—(*epiousion*). Experts in Greek still have not come to any agreement as to its origin, or its precise meaning. Different commentators try to establish links with Greek words that are known, and many suggested meanings have been proposed:

Give us this day our *continuous* bread.

Give us this day our *supersubstantial* (a supernatural gift from heaven) bread.

Give us this day bread *for our sustenance* .

Give us this day our *daily* (or, what we need for today) bread.

Each one of these proposals has its defenders, each makes sense in the context, and each is a possibility based on the limited linguistic information. There does not seem to be a compelling reason to depart from what has become the generally accepted translation, but it does add difficulty, because the meaning of some key word is obscure.

At other times, the words are clear but the meaning is not evident because we are missing some background information that the first readers had. This is surely true in 1 Corinthians 15:20 where Paul speaks of those who were “baptized for the dead.” Is he referring to dead believers who were not baptized and others were being baptized for them so they could be saved (as Mormons claim)? Or, is he referring to others being baptized into the church to fill the ranks of those who have passed on? Or is he referring to a believer being baptized “for” (i.e., “with a view to”) his own death and burial with Christ? Or to something else?

When we are not sure, then several things should be kept in mind. First, we should not build a doctrine on an obscure passage. The rule of thumb in the Bible is “The main things are the plain things, and the plain things are the main things.” This is called the “perspicuity” (clarity) of

Scripture. If something is important, it is clearly taught and probably in more than one place. Second, when a given passage is not clear, we should never conclude that it means something that is opposed to another plain teaching of Scripture.

Forgetting the Bible’s Human Characteristics. With the exception of small sections such as the Ten Commandments, which were “written with the finger of God” (Exod. 31:18), the Bible was not verbally dictated (see Rice). The writers were not secretaries of the Holy Spirit. They were human composers employing their own literary styles and idiosyncrasies. These human authors sometimes used *human sources* for their material (Josh. 10:13 ; Acts 17:28 ; 1 Cor. 15:33 ; Titus 1:12). In fact, every book of the Bible is the composition of a *human writer* — about forty of them in all. The Bible also manifests different *human literary* styles. Writers speak from an observer’s standpoint when they write of the sun rising or setting (Josh. 1:15). They also reveal *human thought patterns* , including memory lapses (1 Cor. 1:14–16), as well as *human emotions* (Gal. 4:14). The Bible discloses specific *human interests* . Hosea has a rural interest, Luke a medical concern, and James a love of nature. Biblical authors include a lawgiver (Moses), a general (Joshua), prophets (Samuel, Isaiah, et al.), kings (David and Solomon), a musician (Asaph), a herdsman (Amos), a prince and statesman (Daniel), a priest (Ezra), a tax collector (Matthew), a physician (Luke), a scholar (Paul), and fishermen (Peter and John). With such a variety of occupations represented by biblical writers, it is only natural that their personal interests and differences should be reflected in their writings.

Like Christ, the Bible is completely human, yet without error. Forgetting the humanity of Scripture can lead to falsely impugning its integrity by expecting a level of expression higher than that which is customary to a human document. This will become more obvious as we discuss the next mistakes of the critics (*see* BIBLE CRITICISM).

Assuming a Partial Report Is a False Report. Critics often jump to the conclusion that a partial report is false. However, this is not so. If it were, most of what has ever been said would be false, since seldom does time or space permit an absolutely complete report. Occasionally biblical writers express the same thing in different ways, or at least from different viewpoints, at different times, stressing different things. Hence, inspiration does not exclude a diversity of expression. The four Gospels relate the same story—often the same incidents—in different ways to different groups of people and sometimes even quotes the same saying with different words. Compare, for example, Peter’s famous confession in the Gospels:

Matthew: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (16:16).

Mark: “You are the Christ” (8:29).

Luke: “The Christ of God” (9:20).

Even the Ten Commandments, which were “written by the finger of God” (Deut. 9:10), are stated with variations the second time they are recorded (cf. Exod. 20:8–11 with Deut. 5:12–15). There are many differences between the books of Kings and Chronicles in their description of identical events, yet they harbor no contradiction in the events they narrate. If such important utterances can be stated in different ways, then there is no reason the rest of Scripture cannot speak truth without employing a wooden literalness of expression.

New Testament Citations of the Old Testaments. Critics often point to variations in the New Testament use of Old Testament Scriptures as a proof of error. They forget that every *citation* need not be an exact *quotation*. Sometimes we use indirect and sometimes direct quotations. It was then (and is today) perfectly acceptable literary style to give the *essence* of a statement without using precisely the *same words*. The same *meaning* can be conveyed without using the same *verbal expressions*.

Variations in the New Testament citations of the Old Testament fall into different categories. Sometimes they are because there is a change of speaker. For example, Zechariah records the Lord as saying, “they will look on *me* whom they have pierced” (12:10). When this is cited in the New Testament, John, not God, is speaking. So it is changed to “They shall look on *him* whom they have pierced” (John 19:37).

At other times, writers cite only part of the Old Testament text. Jesus did this at his home synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:18–19 citing Isa. 61:1–2). In fact, he stopped in the middle of a sentence. Had he gone any farther, he could not have made his central point from the text, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (vs. 21). The very next phrase, “And the day of vengeance of our God,” refers to his second coming.

Sometimes the New Testament paraphrases or summarizes the Old Testament text (e.g., Matt. 2:6). Others blend two texts into one (Matt. 27:9–10). Occasionally a general truth is mentioned, without citing a specific text. For example, Matthew said Jesus moved to Nazareth “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, ‘he shall be called a Nazarene’ ” (Matt. 2:23). Notice, Matthew quotes no given prophet, but rather “prophet *s* ” in general. Several texts speak of the Messiah’s lowliness. To be from Nazareth, a Nazarene, was a byword for low status in the Israel of Jesus’ day.

There are instances where the New Testament applies a text in a different way than the Old Testament did. For example, Hosea applies “Out of Egypt have I called My Son” to the Messianic nation, and Matthew applies it to the product of that nation, the Messiah (Matt. 2:15 from Hosea 11:1). In no case does the New Testament misinterpret or misapply the Old Testament, nor draw some invalid implication from it. The New Testament makes no mistakes in citing the Old Testament, as critics do in citing the New Testament.

Assuming Divergent Accounts Are False. Because two or more accounts of the same event differ, does not mean they are mutually exclusive. Matthew 28:5 says there was one angel at the tomb after the resurrection, whereas John informs us there were two (20:12). But these are not contradictory reports. An infallible mathematical rule easily explains this problem: Where there are two, there is always one. Matthew did not say there was *only* one angel. There may also have been one angel at the tomb at one point on this confusing morning and two at another. One has to add the word “only” to Matthew’s account to make it contradict John’s. But if the critic comes to the texts to show they err, then the error is not in the Bible, but in the critic.

Likewise, Matthew (27:5) informs us that Judas hanged himself. But Luke says that “he burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out” (Acts 1:18). Once more, these accounts are not mutually exclusive. If Judas hanged himself from a tree over the edge of a cliff or gully in

this rocky area, and his body fell on sharp rocks below, then his entrails would gush out just as Luke vividly describes.

Presuming That the Bible Approves of All It Records. It is a mistake to assume that everything contained in the Bible is commended by the Bible. The whole Bible is *true* (John 17:17), but it records some *lies*, for example, Satan’s (Gen. 3:4 ; cf. John 8:44) and Rahab’s (Josh. 2:4). Inspiration encompasses the Bible fully in the sense that it records accurately and truthfully even the lies and errors of sinful beings. The truth of Scripture is found in what the Bible *reveals*, not in everything it *records*. Unless this distinction is held, it may be incorrectly concluded that the Bible teaches immorality because it narrates David’s sin (2 Sam. 11:4), that it promotes polygamy because it records Solomon’s (1 Kings 11:3), or that it affirms atheism because it quotes the fool as saying “there is no God” (Ps. 14:1).

Forgetting That the Bible is Nontechnical. To be true, something does not have to use scholarly, technical, or so-called “scientific” language. The Bible is written for the common person of every generation, and it therefore uses common, everyday language. The use of observational, nonscientific language is not *un* scientific, it is merely *pre* scientific. The Scriptures were written in *ancient* times by ancient standards, and it would be anachronistic to superimpose modern scientific standards upon them. However, it is no more un scientific to speak of the sun “standing still” (Josh. 10:12) than to refer to the sun “rising” (Josh. 1:16). Meteorologists still refer to the times of “sunrise” and “sunset.”

Assuming Round Numbers Are False. Like ordinary speech, the Bible uses round numbers (see Josh. 3:4 ; cf. 4:13). It refers to the diameter as being about one-third of the circumference of something (1 Chron. 19:18 ; 21:5). While this technically is only an approximation (see Lindsell, 165–66); it may be imprecise from the standpoint of a technological society to speak of 3.14159265 as “3,” but it is not incorrect (see SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE). It is sufficient for a “cast metal sea” (2 Chron. 4:2) in an ancient Hebrew temple, even though it would not suffice for a computer in a modern rocket. One should not expect to see actors referring to a wrist watch in a Shakespearean play, nor people in a prescientific age to use precise numbers.

Neglecting to Note Literary Devices. Human language is not limited to one mode of expression. So there is no reason to suppose that only one literary genre was used in a divinely inspired Book. The Bible reveals a number of literary devices: Whole books are written as *poetry* (e.g., Job, Psalms, Proverbs). The Synoptic Gospels feature *parables*. In Galatians 4, Paul utilizes an *allegory*. The New Testament abounds with *metaphors* (2 Cor. 3:2–3 ; James 3:6), *similes* (Matt. 20:1 ; James 1:6), *hyperbole* (John 21:25 ; 2 Cor. 3:2 ; Col. 1:23), and even *poetic figures* (Job 41:1). Jesus employed *satire* (Matt. 19:24 ; 23:24). *Figures of speech* are common throughout the Bible.

It is not a mistake for a biblical writer to use a figure of speech, but it is a mistake for a reader to take a figure of speech literally. Obviously when the Bible speaks of the believer resting under the shadow of God’s “wings” (Ps. 36:7) it does not mean that God is a feathered bird. When the Bible says God “awakes” (Ps. 44:23), as though he were sleeping, it means God is roused to action.

Forgetting That Only the Original Text Is Inerrant. Genuine mistakes have been found—in copies of Bible text made hundreds of years after the autographs. God only uttered the original text of Scripture, not the copies. Therefore, only the original text is without error. Inspiration does not guarantee that every copy is without error, especially in copies made from copies made from copies made from copies (see NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ; OLD TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS). Therefore, we are to expect that minor errors are to be found in manuscript copies.

For example, 2 Kings 8:26 gives the age of King Ahaziah as twenty-two, whereas 2 Chronicles 22:2 says forty-two. The later number cannot be correct, or he would have been older than his father. This is obviously a copyist error, but it does not alter the inerrancy of the original.

First, these are errors in the copies, not the originals. Second, they are minor errors (often in names or numbers) which do not affect any teaching. Third, these copyist errors are relatively few in number. Fourth, usually by the context, or by another Scripture, we know which is in error. For example, Ahaziah must have been twenty-two. Finally, though there is a copyist error, the entire message comes through. For example, if you received a letter with the following statement, would you assume you could collect some money?

“#OU HAVE WON \$10 MILLION.”

Even though there is a mistake in the first word, the entire message comes through—you are ten million dollars richer! And if you received another letter the next day that read like this, you would be even more sure:

“Y#U HAVE WON \$10 MILLION.”

The more mistakes of this kind there are (each in a different place), the more sure you are of the original message. This is why scribal mistakes in the biblical manuscripts do not affect the basic message of the Bible—and why studies of the ancient manuscripts are so important. A Christian can read a modern translation with confidence that it conveys the complete truth of the original Word of God.

Confusing General with Universal Statements. Critics often jump to the conclusion that unqualified statements admit no exceptions. They seize upon verses that offer general truths and then point with glee to obvious exceptions. Such statements are only intended to be generalizations.

The Book of Proverbs has many of these. Proverbial sayings, by their very nature, offer general guidance, not universal assurance. They are rules for life, but rules that admit of exceptions. Proverbs 16:7 affirms that “when a man’s ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.” This obviously was not intended to be a universal truth. Paul was pleasing to the Lord and his enemies stoned him (Acts 14:19). Jesus was pleasing the Lord, and his enemies crucified him. Nonetheless, it is a general truth that one who acts in a way pleasing to God can minimize his enemies’ antagonism.

Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” However, other Scripture passages and experience show that this is not always true. Indeed, some godly persons in the Bible (including Job, Eli, and David) had wayward children. This proverb does not contradict experience because it is a general principle that applies in a general way, but allows for individual exceptions. Proverbs are not designed to be absolute guarantees. Rather, they express truths that provide helpful advice and guidance by which the individual should conduct his daily life.

Proverbs are *wisdom* (general guides), not *law* (universally binding imperatives). When the Bible declares “You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy” (Lev. 11:45), then there are no exceptions. Holiness, goodness, love, truth, and justice are rooted in the very nature of an unchanging God. But wisdom literature applies God’s universal truths to life’s changing circumstances. The results will not always be the same. Nonetheless, they are helpful guides.

Forgetting That Later Revelation Supersedes Earlier. Sometimes critics do not recognize progressive revelation. God does not reveal everything at once, nor does he lay down the same conditions for every period of history. Some of his later revelations will supersede his earlier statements. Bible critics sometimes confuse a *change* in revelation with a *mistake*. That a parent allows a very small child to eat with his fingers but demands that an older child use a fork and spoon, is not a contradiction. This is progressive revelation, with each command suited to the circumstance.

There was a time when God tested the human race by forbidding them to eat of a specific tree in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:16–17). This command is no longer in effect, but the later revelation does not contradict this former revelation. Also, there was a period (under the Mosaic law) when God commanded that animals be sacrificed for people’s sin. However, since Christ offered the perfect sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:11–14), this Old Testament command is no longer in effect. There is no contradiction between the later and the former commands.

Likewise, when God created the human race, he commanded that they eat only fruit and vegetables (Gen. 1:29). But later, when conditions changed after the flood, God commanded that they also eat meat (Gen. 9:3). This change from herbivorous to omnivorous status is progressive revelation, but it is not a contradiction. In fact, all these subsequent revelations were simply different commands for different people at different times in God’s overall plan of redemption.

Of course, God cannot change commands that have to do with his unchangeable nature (cf. Mal. 3:6; Heb. 6:18). For example, since God is love (1 John 4:16), he cannot command that we hate him. Nor can he command what is logically impossible, for example, to both offer and not offer a sacrifice for sin at the same time and in the same sense. But these moral and logical limits notwithstanding, God can and has given noncontradictory, progressive revelations which, if taken out of its proper context and juxtaposed, can look contradictory. This is as much a mistake as to assume a parent is self-contradictory for allowing a sixteen-year-old to stay up later at night than a six-year-old.

After forty years of continual and careful study of the Bible, I can only conclude that those who have “discovered a mistake” in the Bible do not know too much about the Bible—they know too little about it. This does not mean, of course, that we understand how to resolve all the difficulties in the Scriptures. But we have seen enough problems resolved to know these also admit answers. Meanwhile, Mark Twain had a point when he concluded that it was not the parts of the Bible he did not understand that bothered him—but the parts he did understand!

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Bible, Canonicity of.

Canonicity (Fr. *canon*, rule or norm) refers to the normative or authoritative books inspired by God for inclusion in Holy Scripture. Canonicity is determined by God (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR). It is not the antiquity, authenticity, or religious community that makes a book canonical or authoritative. A book is valuable because it is canonical, and not canonical because it is or was considered valuable. Its authority is *established* by God and merely *discovered* by God’s people.

Bib. Sac. *Bibliotheca Sacra*

Definition of Canonicity. The distinction between God’s determination and human discovery is essential to the correct view of canonicity, and should be drawn carefully:

The Authority Relationship Between Church and Canon

Incorrect View	Biblical View
The church is determiner of the canon.	The church is discoverer of the canon.
The church is mother of the canon.	The church is child of the canon.
The church is magistrate of the canon.	The church is minister of the canon.
The church is regulator of the canon.	The church is recognizer of the canon.
The church is judge of the canon.	The church is witness of the canon.
The church is master of the canon.	The church is servant of the canon.

In the “Incorrect View” the authority of the Scriptures is based upon the authority of the church; the correct view is that the authority of the church is to be found *in* the authority of the Scriptures. The incorrect view places the church *over* the canon, whereas the proper position views the church *under* the canon. In fact, if in the column titled “Incorrect View,” the word *church* be replaced by God, then the proper view of the canon emerges clearly. It is God who *regulated* the canon; man merely *recognized* the divine authority God gave to it. God *determined* the canon, and man *discovered* it. Louis Gaussen gives an excellent summary of this position:

In this affair, then, the Church is a servant and not a mistress; a depository and not a judge. She exercises the office of a minister, not of a magistrate. . . . She delivers a testimony, not a judicial sentence. She discerns the canon of the Scriptures, she does not make it; she has recognized their authenticity, she has not given it. . . . The authority of the Scriptures is not founded, then, on the authority of the Church: It is the church that is founded on the authority of the Scriptures. [Gaussen, 137]

Discovering Canonicity. Appropriate methods must be employed to discover which books God determined to be canonical. Otherwise, the list of canonical books might be varied and incorrectly identified. Many procedures used in the study of the Old Testament canon have been marred by the use of fallacious methods (*see* APOCRYPHA, OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS).

Inadequate Criteria for Canonicity. Five mistaken methods have particularly troubled the church (*see* Beckwith, 7–8):

1. failure to distinguish a book that was “known” from a book that carried God’s authority;

2. failure to distinguish disagreement about the canon between different parties from uncertainty about the canon within those parties;
3. failure to distinguish between the adding of books to the canon and the removal of books from it;
4. failure to distinguish between the canon that the community recognized and eccentric views of individuals;
5. failure to properly use Jewish evidence about the canon transmitted through Christian hands, either by denying the Jewish origins or by ignoring the Christian medium through which it has come (Beckwith, 7–8).

Principles of Canonicity. Granted that God gave authority and hence canonicity to the Bible, another question arises: How did believers become aware of what God had done? The accepted canonical books of the Bible themselves refer to other books that are no longer available, for example, the “Book of Jasher” (Josh. 10:13) and “the Book of the Wars of the Lord” (Num. 21:14). Then there are *Apocryphal* books and the so-called “lost books.” How did the Fathers know those were not inspired? Did not John (21:25) and Luke (1:1) speak of a profusion of religious literature? Were there not false epistles (2 Thess. 2:2)? What marks of inspiration guided the Fathers as they identified and collected the inspired books? Perhaps the very fact that some canonical books were doubted at times, on the basis of one principle or another, argues both for the value of the principle and the caution of the Fathers in their recognition of canonicity. It provides assurance that the people of God really included the books God wanted.

Five foundational questions lie at the very heart of the discovery process:

Was the book written by a prophet of God? The basic question was whether a book was prophetic. Propheticity determined canonicity. A prophet was one who declared what God had disclosed. Thus, only the prophetic writings were canonic. Anything not written by a prophet of God was not part of the Word of God. The characteristic words “And the word of the Lord came to the prophet,” or “The Lord said unto,” or “God spoke” so fill the Old Testament that they have become proverbial. If substantiated these claims of inspiration are so clear that it was hardly necessary to discuss whether some books were divine in origin. In most cases it was simply a matter of establishing the authorship of the book. If it was written by a recognized apostle or prophet, its place in the canon was secured.

Historical or stylistic (external or internal) evidence that supports the genuineness of a prophetic book also argues for its canonicity. This was exactly the argument Paul used to defend his harsh words to the Galatians (Gal. 1:1–24). He argued that his message was authoritative because he was an authorized messenger of God, “an apostle not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father” (Gal. 1:1). He also turned the tables on his opponents who preached “a different gospel; which is really not another; only . . . to distort the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6–7). His opponents’ gospel could not be true because they were “false brethren” (Gal. 2:4).

It should be noted in this connection that occasionally the Bible contains true prophecies from individuals whose status as people of God is questionable, such as Balaam (Num. 24:17) and Caiaphas (John 11:49). However, granted that their prophecies were consciously given, these prophets were not writers of Bible books, but were merely quoted by the actual writer. Therefore, their utterances are in the same category as the Greek poets quoted by the apostle Paul (cf. Acts 17:28 ; 1 Cor. 15:33 ; Titus 1:12).

The arguments Paul used against the false teachers at Galatia were also used as grounds for rejecting a letter that was forged or written under false pretenses. One such letter is mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:2 . A book cannot be canonical if it is not genuine. A book might use the device of literary impersonation without deception. One writer assumes the role of another for effect. Some scholars feel such is the case in Ecclesiastes, if *Koheleth* wrote autobiographically as though he were Solomon (see Leupold, 8f.). Such a view is not incompatible with the principle, provided it can be shown to be a literary device and not a moral deception. However, when an author pretends to be an apostle in order to gain acceptance of his ideas, as the writers of many New Testament *Apocryphal* books did, then it is moral deception.

Because of this “prophetic” principle, 2 Peter was disputed in the early church. Even Eusebius in the fourth century said, “But the so-called second Epistle we have not received as canonical, but nevertheless it has appeared useful to many, and has been studied with other Scriptures” (Eusebius 1:193). On the basis of differences in the style of writing, it was felt by some that the author of 2 Peter could not be the same as the author of 1 Peter. But 2 Peter claimed to have been written by “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1). Thus, the epistle was either a forgery or there was great difficulty in explaining its different style. Those who were disturbed by such evidence doubted the genuineness of 2 Peter and it was placed among the antilegomena books for a time. It was finally admitted on the grounds that it was Peter’s genuine writing. The differences in style can be accounted for by the time lapse, different occasions, and the fact that Peter verbally dictated 1 Peter to an amanuensis (or secretary; see 1 Peter 5:13).

Inspiration was so certain in many prophetic writings that their inclusion was obvious. Some were rejected because they lacked authority, particularly the pseudepigrapha. These books provided no support for their claim. In many cases the writing is fanciful and magical. This same principle of authority was the reason the book of Esther was doubted, particularly since the name of God is conspicuously absent. Upon closer examination, Esther retained its place in the canon after the Fathers were convinced that authority was present, although less observable.

Was the writer confirmed by acts of God? A miracle is an act of God to confirm the word of God given through a prophet of God to the people of God. It is the sign to substantiate his sermon; the miracle to confirm his message. Not every prophetic revelation was confirmed by a specific miracle. There were other ways to determine the authenticity of an alleged prophet. If there were questions about one’s prophetic credentials it could be settled by divine confirmation, as indeed it was on numerous occasions throughout Scripture (Exodus 4 ; Numbers 16–17 ; 1 Kings 18 ; Mark 2 ; Acts 5 ; see MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE).

There were true and false prophets (Matt. 7:15), so it was necessary to have divine confirmation of the true ones. Moses was given miraculous powers to prove his call (Exod. 4:1–9). Elijah triumphed over the false prophets of Baal by a supernatural act (1 Kings 18). Jesus was attested to by miracles and signs God performed through him (Acts 2:22). As to the apostles' message, "God was also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to his own will" (Heb. 2:4). Paul gave testimony of his apostleship to the Corinthians, declaring, "the signs of a true apostle were performed among you with all perseverance, by signs and wonders and miracles" (2 Cor. 12:12 ; see MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF).

Does the message tell the truth about God? Only immediate contemporaries had access to the supernatural confirmation of the prophet's message. Other believers in distant places and subsequent times had to depend on other tests. One such test was the *authenticity* of a book. That is, does the book tell the truth about God and his world as known from previous revelations? God cannot contradict himself (2 Cor. 1:17–18), nor can he utter what is false (Heb. 6:18). No book with false claims can be the Word of God. Moses stated the principle about prophets generally that

If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying, "Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them," you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. [Deut. 13:1–3]

So any teaching about God contrary to what his people already knew to be true was to be rejected. Furthermore, any predictions made about the world which failed to come true indicated that a prophet's words should be rejected. As Moses said to Israel,

And you may say in your heart, "How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?" When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him. [Deut. 18:21–22]

A prophet who made such false claims might be stoned. The Lord said, "The prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die" (Deut. 18:20). That kind of punishment assured no repeat performance by that prophet, and it gave other prophets pause before they said, "Thus says the Lord."

Truth in itself does not make a book canonical. This is more a test of *inauthenticity* of a book, rather than canonicity. It is a negative test that could eliminate books from the canon. The Bereans used this principle when they searched the Scriptures to see whether Paul's teaching was true (Acts 17:11). If the preaching of the apostle did not accord with the teaching of the Old Testament canon, it could not be of God.

Much of the *Apocrypha* was rejected because it was not authentic. The Jewish Fathers and early Christian Fathers rejected, or considered second-rate, these books because they had

historical inaccuracies and even moral incongruities. The Reformers rejected some because of what they considered to be heretical teaching, such as praying for the dead, which 2 Maccabees 12:45 supports. The apostle John strongly urged that all purported "truth" be tested by the known standard before it be received (1 John 4:1–6).

The test of authenticity was the reason James and Jude have been doubted. Some have thought Jude inauthentic because it may quote inauthentic pseudepigraphical books (Jude 9 , 14 ; see Jerome, 4). Martin Luther questioned the canonicity of James because it lacks an obvious focus on the cross. Martin Luther thought the book appeared to teach salvation by works. Careful study has cleared James of these charges, and even Luther came to feel better about them. Historically and uniformly, Jude and James have been vindicated and their canonicity recognized after they have been harmonized with the rest of Scripture.

Did it come with the power of God? Another test for canonicity is a book's power to edify and equip believers. This requires the power of God. The Fathers believed the Word of God to be "living and active" (Heb. 4:12) and consequently ought to have a transforming force (2 Tim. 3:17 ; 1 Peter 1:23). If the message of a book did not effect its stated goal, if it did not have the power to change a life, then God was apparently not behind its message. A *message* of God would certainly be backed by the *might* of God. The Fathers believed that the Word of God accomplishes its purpose (Isa. 55:11).

Paul applied this principle to the Old Testament when he wrote to Timothy, "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15 KJV). If it is of God, it will work—it will come to pass. This simple test was given by Moses to try the truth of a prophet's prediction (Deut. 18:20ff.). If what was foretold did not materialize, it was not from God.

On this basis, heretical literature and good noncanonical apostolic literature was rejected from the canon. Even those books whose teaching was spiritual, but whose message was at best only devotional, were deemed noncanonical. Such is the case for most literature written in the apostolic and subapostolic periods. There is a tremendous difference between the canonical books of the New Testament and other religious writings of the apostolic period. "There is not the same freshness and originality, depth and clearness. And this is no wonder, for it means the transition from truth given by infallible inspiration to truth produced by fallible pioneers" (Berkhof, 42). The noncanonical books lacked power; they were devoid of the dynamic aspects found in inspired Scripture. They did not come with the power of God.

Books whose edifying power was questioned included Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs) and Ecclesiastes. Could a book that is erotically sensual or skeptical be from God? Obviously not; as long as these books were thought of in that manner, they could not be considered canonical. Eventually, the messages of these books were seen as spiritual, so the books themselves were accepted. The principle, nevertheless, was applied impartially. Some books passed the test; others failed. No book that lacked essential edificational or practical characteristics was considered canonical.

Was it accepted by the people of God? A prophet of God was confirmed by an act of God (miracle) and was recognized as a spokesman by the people who received the message. Thus, the seal of canonicity depended on whether the book was accepted by the people. This does not mean that everybody in the community to which the prophetic message was addressed accepted it as divinely authoritative. Prophets (1 Kings 17–19 ; 2 Chron. 36:11–16) and apostles (Galatians 1) were rejected by some. However, believers in the prophet’s community acknowledged the prophetic nature of the message, as did other contemporary believers familiar with the prophet. This acceptance had two stages: initial acceptance and subsequent recognition.

Initial acceptance of a book by the people to whom it was addressed was crucial. Paul said of the Thessalonians, “We also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God’s message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God” (1 Thess. 2:13). Whatever subsequent debate there may have been about a book’s place, the people in the best position to know its prophetic credentials were those who knew the writer. The definitive evidence is that which attests acceptance by contemporary believers.

There is ample evidence that books were immediately accepted into the canon. Moses’ books were immediately placed with the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31:26). Joshua’s writing was added (Josh. 24:26). Following were books by Samuel and others (1 Sam. 10:25). Daniel had a copy of Moses and the Prophets, which included the book of his contemporary Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2 , 10–11). Paul quoted the Gospel of Luke as “Scripture” (1 Tim. 5:18). Peter had a collection of Paul’s “letter” (2 Peter 3:16). Indeed, the apostles exhorted that their letters be read and circulated among the churches (Col. 4:16 ; 1 Thess. 5:27 ; Rev. 1:3).

Some have argued that Proverbs 25:1 shows an exception. It suggests that some of Solomon’s proverbs may not have been collected into the canon during his lifetime. Rather, “the men of Hezekiah . . . transcribed” more of Solomon’s proverbs. It is possible that these additional proverbs (chaps. 25–29) were not officially presented to the believing community during Solomon’s life, perhaps because of his later moral decline. However, since they were *authentic* Solomonic proverbs there was no reason not to later present and at that time immediately accept them as authoritative. In this case Proverbs 25–29 would not be an exception to the canonic rule of immediate acceptance.

It is also possible that these later chapters of Proverbs were presented and accepted as authoritative during Solomon’s lifetime. Support for this view can be derived from the fact that the Solomonic part of the book may have been compiled in three sections, which begin at 1:1 , 10:1 , and 25:1 . Perhaps these were preserved on separate scrolls. The word *also* in Proverbs 25:1 can refer to the fact that Hezekiah’s men also copied this last section (scroll) along with the first two sections (scrolls). All three scrolls would have been immediately accepted as divinely authoritative and were only copied afresh by the scholars.

Since Scripture of every time period is referred to in later biblical writings, and each book is quoted by some early church Father or listed in some canon, there is ample evidence that there was continuing agreement within the covenant community concerning the canon. That certain books were written by prophets in biblical times and are in the canon now argues for their canonicity. Along with evidence for a continuity of belief, this argues strongly that the idea of

canonicity existed from the beginning. The presence of a book in the canon down through the centuries is evidence that it was known by the contemporaries of the prophet who wrote it to be genuine and authoritative, despite the fact that succeeding generations lacked definitive knowledge of the author’s prophetic credentials.

Later debate about certain books should not cloud their initial acceptance by immediate contemporaries of the prophets. True canonicity was *determined* by God when he directed the prophet to write it, and it was immediately *discovered* by the people addressed.

Technically speaking, the discussion about certain books in later centuries was not a question of *canonicity* but of *authenticity* or *genuineness* . Because later readers had neither access to the writer nor direct evidence of supernatural confirmation, they had to rely on historical testimony. Once they were convinced by the evidence that books were written by accredited spokespeople for God, the books were accepted by the church universal. But the decisions of church councils in the fourth and fifth centuries did not determine the canon, nor did they first discover or recognize it. In no sense was the authority of the canonical books contingent upon the late church councils. All the councils did was to give *later, broader, and final* recognition to the facts that God had inspired the books, and the people of God had accepted them.

Several centuries went by before all the books in the canon were recognized. Communication and transportation were slow, so it took longer for the believers in the West to become fully aware of the evidence for books that had circulated first in the East, and vice versa. Prior to 313 the church faced frequent persecution that did not allow leisure for research, reflection, and recognition. As soon as that was possible, it was only a short time before there was general recognition of all canonical books by the regional councils of Hippo (393) and Carthage (397). There was no great need for precision until a dispute arose. Marcion published his gnostic canon, with only Luke and ten of Paul’s Epistles, in the middle of the second century. Spurious gospels and epistles appeared throughout the second and third centuries. Since those books claimed divine authority, the universal church had to define the limits of God’s authentic, inspired canon that already was known.

Applying Principles of Canonicity. Lest the impression be given that these principles were explicitly and mechanically applied by some commission, some explanation is needed. Just how did the principles operate in the consciousness of the early Christian church? Although the issue of the discovery of the canon center about the Old and New Testaments alike, J. N. D. Kelly discusses these principles as they apply to the New Testament canon. He writes,

The main point to be observed is that the fixation of the finally agreed list of books, and of the order in which they were to be arranged, was the result of a very gradual process. . . . Three features of this process should be noted. First, the criterion which ultimately came to prevail was apostolicity. Unless a book could be shown to come from the pen of an apostle, or at least to have the authority of an apostle behind it, it was peremptorily rejected, however edifying or popular with the faithful it might be. Secondly, there were certain books which hovered for a long time on the fringe of the canon, but in the end failed to secure admission to it, usually because they lacked this indisputable stamp. . . . Thirdly, some of the books which were later included had to wait

a considerable time before achieving universal recognition. . . . By gradual stages, however, the Church both in East and West arrived at a common mind as to its sacred books. The first official document which prescribes the twenty-seven books of our new Testament as alone canonical is Athanasius's Easter letter for the year 367, but the process was not everywhere complete until at least a century and a half later. [Kelly, 59–60]

Some Principles Are Implicit While Others Are Explicit. All criteria of inspiration are necessary to demonstrate the canonicity of each book. The five characteristics must at least be implicitly present, though some of them are more dominant than others. For example, the dynamic equipping power of God is more obvious in the New Testament Epistles than in the Old Testament historical narratives. “Thus-says-the-Lord” authority is more apparent in the Prophets than in the poetry. That is not to say that authority isn't in the poetic sections, nor a dynamic in the redemptive history. It does mean the Fathers did not always find all of the principles explicitly operating.

Some Principles Are More Important Than Others. Some criteria of inspiration are more important than are others, in that the presence of one implies another, or is a key to others. For example, if a book is authoritatively from God, it will be dynamic—accompanied by God's transforming power. In fact, when authority was unmistakably present, the other characteristics of inspiration were automatically assumed. Among New Testament books the proof of apostolicity, its prophetic nature, was often considered a guarantee of inspiration (Warfield, 415). If propheticity could be verified, this alone established the book. Generally speaking, the church Fathers were only explicitly concerned with apostolicity and authenticity. The edifying characteristics and universal acceptance of a book were assumed unless some doubt from the latter two questions forced a reexamination of the tests. This happened with 2 Peter and 2 John. Positive evidence for the first three principles emerged victorious.

The witness of the Holy Spirit. The recognition of canonicity was not a mere mechanical matter settled by a synod or ecclesiastical council. It was a providential process directed by the Spirit of God as he witnessed to the church about the reality of the Word of God (*see* HOLY SPIRIT, ROLE IN APOLOGETICS). People could not identify the Word until the Holy Spirit opened their understanding. Jesus said, “My sheep hear my voice” (John 10:27). This is not to say that the Holy Spirit mystically spoke in visions to settle questions of canonicity. The witness of the Spirit convinced them of the reality that a God-breathed canon existed, not its extent (Sproul, 337–54). Faith joined science; objective principles were used, but the Fathers knew what writings had been used in their churches to change lives and teach hearts by the Holy Spirit. This subjective testimony joined the objective evidence in confirming what was God's Word.

Tests for canonicity were not mechanical means to measure the amount of inspired literature, nor did the Holy Spirit say, “This book or passage is inspired; that one is not.” That would be disclosure, not discovery. The Holy Spirit providentially guided the examination process and gave witness to the people as they read or heard.

Conclusion. It is important to distinguish between the *determination* and the *discovery* of canonicity. God is solely responsible for determining; God's people are responsible for

discovery. That a book is canonical is due to divine *inspiration* . How it is known to be canonical is due to a process of human recognition. Was a book (1) written by a spokesperson for God, (2) who was confirmed by an act of God, (3) told the truth (4) in the power of God and (5) was accepted by the people of God? If a book clearly had the first mark, canonicity was often assumed. Contemporaries of a prophet or apostle made the initial confirmation. Later church Fathers sorted out the profusion of religious literature to officially recognize what books were divinely inspired in the manner of which Paul speaks in 2 Timothy 3:16 .

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Bible Criticism.

Criticism as applied to the Bible simply means the exercise of judgment. Both conservative and nonconservative scholars engage in two forms of biblical criticism: *lower criticism* deals with the text; *higher criticism* treats the source of the text. Lower criticism attempts to determine what the original text said, and the latter asks who said it and when, where, and why it was written.

Most controversies surrounding Bible criticism involve higher criticism. Higher criticism can be divided into negative (destructive) and positive (constructive) types. Negative criticism denies the authenticity of much of the biblical record. Usually an antisupernatural presupposition (*see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST ; MIRACLES, MYTH AND) is employed in this critical approach. Further, negative criticism often approaches the Bible with distrust equivalent to a “guilty-until-proven-innocent” bias.

Negative New Testament Criticism. *Historical*, *Source*, *Form*, *Tradition*, and *Redaction* methods (and combinations thereof) are the approaches with the worst record for bias. Any of these, used to advance an agenda of skepticism, with little or no regard for truth, undermine the Christian apologetic.

Historical Criticism. Historical criticism is a broad term that covers techniques to date documents and traditions, to verify events reported in those documents, and to use the results in historiography to reconstruct and interpret. The French Oratorian priest Richard Simon published a series of books, beginning in 1678, in which he applied a rationalistic, critical approach to studying the Bible. This was the birth of historical-critical study of the Bible, although not until Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827) and Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791) was the modern historical-critical pattern set. They were influenced by the secular historical research of Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776–1831; *Römische Geschichte*, 1811–12), Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886; *Geschichte der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494–1535*), and others, who developed and refined the techniques. Among those influenced was Johann Christian Konrad von Hofmann (1810–1877). He combined elements of Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854), Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), and orthodox Lutheranism with historical categories and the critical methods to make a biblical-theological synthesis. This model stressed “superhistorical history,” “holy history,” or “salvation history” (*Heilsgeschichte*)—the sorts of history that need not be literally true. His ideas and terms influenced Karl Barth (1886–1968), Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976), and others in the twentieth century. Toward the close of the nineteenth century, capable orthodox scholars challenged “destructive criticism” and its rationalistic theology.

Among more conservative scholars were George Salmon (1819–1904), Theodor von Zahn (1838–1933), and R. H. Lightfoot (1883–1953), who used criticism methods as the bases for a constructive criticism. This constructive criticism manifests itself most openly when it considers such matters as miracles, virgin birth of Jesus, and bodily resurrection of Christ (*see* RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR). Historical criticism is today taken for granted in biblical studies. Much recent work in historical criticism manifests rationalistic theology that at the same time claims to uphold traditional Christian doctrine. As a result, it has given rise to such developments as source criticism.

Source Criticism. Source criticism, also known as literary criticism, attempts to discover and define literary sources used by the biblical writers. It seeks to uncover underlying literary sources, classify types of literature, and answer questions relating to authorship, unity, and date of Old and New Testament materials (Geisler, 436). Some literary critics tend to decimate the biblical text, pronounce certain books inauthentic, and reject the very notion of verbal inspiration. Some scholars have carried their rejection of authority to the point that they have modified the idea of the canon (e.g., with regard to pseudonymity) to accommodate their own conclusions (ibid., 436). Nevertheless, this difficult but important undertaking can be a valuable aid to biblical interpretation, since it has bearing on the historical value of biblical writings. In addition, careful literary criticism can prevent historical misinterpretations of the biblical text.

Source criticism in the New Testament over the past century has focused on the so-called “Synoptic problem,” since it relates to difficulties surrounding attempts to devise a scheme of literary dependence that accounts for similarities and dissimilarities among the Synoptic Gospels

of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Theories tend to work with the idea of a now-absent *Q* or *Quelle* (“Source”) used by the three evangelists, who wrote in various sequences, with the second depending on the first and the third on the other two. These theories were typical forerunners of the Two-Source theory advanced by B. H. Streeter (1874–1937), which asserted the priority of Mark and eventually gained wide acceptance among New Testament scholars. Streeter’s arguments have been questioned, and his thesis has been challenged by others. Eta Linnemann, once a student of Bultmann and a critic, has written a strong critique of her former position in which she uses source analysis to conclude that no synoptic problem in fact exists. She insists that each Gospel writer wrote an independent account based on personal experience and individual information. She wrote: “As time passes, I become more and more convinced that to a considerable degree New Testament criticism as practiced by those committed to historical-critical theology does not deserve to be called science” (Linnemann, 9). Elsewhere she writes, “The Gospels are not works of literature that creatively reshape already finished material after the manner in which Goethe reshaped the popular book about Dr. Faust” (ibid., 104). Rather, “Every Gospel presents a complete, unique testimony. It owes its existence to direct or indirect eyewitnesses” (ibid., 194).

Form Criticism. Form criticism studies literary forms, such as essays, poems, and myths, since different writings have different forms. Often the form of a piece of literature can tell a great deal about the nature of a literary piece, its writer, and its social context. Technically this is termed its “life setting” (*Sitz im Leben*). The classic liberal position is the documentary or J-E-P-D Pentateuchal source analysis theory established by Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) and his followers (*see* PENTATEUCH, MOSAIC AUTHORSHIP OF). They actually attempted to mediate between traditionalism and skepticism, dating Old Testament books in a less supernaturalistic manner by applying the “documentary theory.” These documents are identified as the “Jahwist” or Jehovistic (J), dated in the ninth century B.C., the Elohist (E), eighth century, the Deuteronomist (D), from about the time of Josiah (640–609), and the Priestly (P), from perhaps the fifth century B.C. So attractive was the evolutionary concept in literary criticism that the source theory of Pentateuchal origins began to prevail over all opposition. A mediating position of some aspects of the theory was expressed by C. F. A. Dillman (1823–1894), Rudolph Kittle (1853–1929), and others. Opposition to the documentary theory was expressed by Franz Delitzsch (1813–1890), who rejected the hypothesis outright in his commentary on Genesis, William Henry Green (1825–1900), James Orr (1844–1913), A. H. Sayce (1845–1933), Wilhelm Möller, Eduard Naville, Robert Dick Wilson (1856–1930), and others (*see* Harrison, 239–41; Archer; Pfeiffer). Sometimes form-critical studies are marred by doctrinaire assumptions, including that early forms must be short and later forms longer, but, in general, form criticism has been of benefit to biblical interpretation. Form criticism has been most profitably used in the study of the Psalms (Wenham, “History and the Old Testament,” 40).

These techniques were introduced into New Testament study of the Gospels as *Formgeschichte* (“form history”) or *form criticism*. Following in the tradition of Heinrich Paulus and Wilhelm De Wette (1780–1849), among others, scholars at Tübingen built on the foundation of source criticism theory. They advocated the priority of Mark as the earliest Gospel and multiple written sources. William Wrede (1859–1906) and other form critics sought to eliminate the chronological-geographical framework of the Synoptic Gospels and to investigate the twenty-year period of oral traditions between the close of New Testament events and the earliest

written accounts of those events. They attempted to classify this material into “forms” of oral tradition and to discover the historical situation (*Sitz im Leben*) within the early church that gave rise to these forms. These units of tradition are usually assumed to reflect more of the life and teaching of the early church than the life and teaching of the historical Jesus. Forms in which the units are cast are clues to their relative historical value.

The fundamental assumption of form criticism is typified by Martin Dibelius (1883–1947) and Bultmann. By creating new words and deeds of Jesus as the situation demanded, the evangelists arranged the units or oral tradition and created artificial contexts to serve their own purposes. In challenging the authorship, date, structure, and style of other New Testament books, destructive critics arrived at similar conclusions. To derive a fragmented New Testament theology, they rejected Pauline authorship for all Epistles traditionally ascribed to him except Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, and Galatians (Hodges, 339–48).

Thoroughgoing form critics hold two basic assumptions: (1) The early Christian community had little or no genuine biographical interest or integrity, so it created and transformed oral tradition to meet its own needs. (2) The evangelists were compiler-editors of individual, isolated units of tradition that they arranged and rearranged without regard for historical reality (see Thomas and Gundry, *A Harmony of the Gospels* [281–82], who identify Dibelius, Bultmann, Burton S. Easton, R. H. Lightfoot, Vincent Taylor, and D. E. Nineham as preeminent New Testament form critics).

Tradition Criticism. Tradition criticism is primarily concerned with the history of traditions before they were recorded in writing. The stories of the patriarchs, for example, were probably passed down through generations by word of mouth until they were written as a continuous narrative. These oral traditions may have been changed over the long process of transmission. It is of great interest to the biblical scholar to know what changes were made and how the later tradition, now enshrined in a literary source, differs from the earliest oral version.

Tradition criticism is less certain or secure than literary criticism because it begins where literary criticism leaves off, with conclusions that are in themselves uncertain. It is difficult to check the hypotheses about development of an oral tradition (Wenham, *ibid.*, 40–41). Even more tenuous is the “liturgical tradition” enunciated by S. Mowinkel and his Scandinavian associates, who argue that literary origins were related to preexilic sanctuary rituals and sociological phenomena. An offshoot of the liturgical approach is the “myth and ritual” school of S. H. Hooke, which argues that a distinctive set of rituals and myths were common to all Near Eastern peoples, including the Hebrews. Both of these approaches use Babylonian festival analogies to support their variations on the classical literary-critical and tradition-critical themes (Harrison, 241).

Form criticism is closely aligned with tradition criticism in New Testament studies. A review of many of the basic assumptions in view of the New Testament text have been made by Oscar Cullmann, *The Christology of the New Testament* , and I. Howard Marshall, *The Origins of New Testament Christology and I Believe in the Historical Jesus* . Also see the discussions in Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* and *Introduction to the New Testament*

as Canon , and Gerhard Hasel, *Old Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* and *New Testament Theology: Basic Issues in the Current Debate* .

Redaction Criticism. Redaction criticism is more closely associated with the text than is traditional criticism. As a result, it is less open to the charge of subjective speculation. Redaction (editorial) critics can achieve absolute certainty only when all the sources are used that were at the disposal of the redactor (editor), since the task is to determine how a redactor compiled sources, what was omitted, what was added, and what particular bias was involved in the process. At best, the critic has only some of the sources available, such as the books of Kings used by the writers of Chronicles. Elsewhere, in both the Old and the New Testaments, the sources must be reconstructed out of the edited work itself. Then redaction criticism becomes much less certain as a literary device (Wenham, “Gospel Origins,” 439).

Redaction critics tend to favor a view that biblical books were written much later and by different authors than the text relates. Late theological editors attached names out of history to their works for the sake of prestige and credibility. In Old and New Testament studies this view arose from historical criticism, source criticism, and form criticism. As a result, it adopts many of the same presuppositions, including the documentary hypothesis in the Old Testament, and the priority of Mark in the New Testament.

Evaluation. As already noted, higher criticism can be helpful as long as critics are content with analysis based on what can be objectively known or reasonably theorized. Real criticism doesn’t begin its work with the intent to subvert the authority and teaching of Scripture.

Kinds of Criticism Contrasted. However, much of modern biblical criticism springs from unbiblical philosophical presuppositions exposed by Gerhard Maier in *The End of the Historical Critical Method* . These presuppositions incompatible with Christian faith include deism, materialism, skepticism, agnosticism, Hegelian idealism, and existentialism. Most basic is a prevailing naturalism (antisupernaturalism) that is intuitively hostile to any document containing miracle stories (see MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ; MIRACLES, MYTH AND). This naturalistic bias divides negative (destructive) from positive (constructive) higher criticism:

	Positive Criticism (Constructive)	Negative Criticism (Destructive)
Basis	Supernaturalistic	Naturalistic
Rule	Text is “innocent until proven guilty”	Text is “guilty until proven innocent”
Result	Bible is wholly true	Bible is partly true
Final Authority	Word of God	Mind of man
Role of Reason	To discover truth (rationality)	To determine truth (rationalism)

Some of the negative presuppositions call for scrutiny, especially as they relate to the Gospel record. This analysis is especially relevant to source criticism, form criticism, and redaction

criticism, as these methods challenge the genuineness, authenticity, and consequently the divine authority of the Bible. This kind of biblical criticism is unfounded.

Unscholarly bias. It imposes its own antisupernatural bias on the documents. The originator of modern negative criticism, Benedict Spinoza, for example, declared that Moses did not write the Pentateuch, nor Daniel the whole book of Daniel, nor did any miracle recorded actually occur. Miracles, he claimed, are scientifically and rationally impossible.

In the wake of Spinoza, negative critics concluded that Isaiah did not write the whole book of Isaiah. That would have involved supernatural predictions (including knowing the name of King Cyrus) over 100 years in advance (*see* PROPHECY AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE). Likewise, negative critics concluded Daniel could not have been written until 165 B.C. That late authorship placed it after the fulfillment of its detailed description of world governments and rulers down to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (d. 163 B.C.). Supernatural predictions of coming events was not considered an option. The same naturalistic bias was applied to the New Testament by David Strauss (1808–1874), Albert Schweitzer (1875–1965), and Bultmann, with the same devastating results.

The foundations of this antisupernaturalism crumbled with evidence that the universe began with a big bang (*see* EVOLUTION, COSMIC). Even agnostics such as Robert Jastrow (Jastrow, 18), speak of “supernatural” forces at work (Kenny, 66; *see* AGNOSTICISM ; MIRACLE ; MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST), so it is sufficient to note here that, with the demise of modern antisupernaturalism, there is no philosophical basis for destructive criticism.

Inaccurate view of authorship. Negative criticism either neglects or minimizes the role of apostles and eyewitnesses who recorded the events. Of the four Gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and John were definitely eyewitnesses of the events they report. Luke was a contemporary and careful historian (Luke 1:1–4 ; *see* Acts). Indeed, every book of the New Testament was written by a contemporary or eyewitness of Christ. Even such critics as the “Death-of-God” theologian John A. T. Robinson admit that the Gospels were written between 40 and 65 (Robinson, 352), during the life of eyewitnesses.

But if the basic New Testament documents were composed by eyewitnesses, then much of destructive criticism fails. It assumes the passage of much time while “myths” developed. Studies have revealed that it takes two generations for a myth to develop (Sherwin-White, 190).

What Jesus really said. It wrongly assumes that the New Testament writers did not distinguish between their own words and those of Jesus. That a clear distinction was made between Jesus’ words and those of the Gospel writers is evident from the ease by which a “red letter” edition of the New Testament can be made. Indeed, the apostle Paul is clear to distinguish his own words from those of Jesus (*see* Acts 20:35 ; 1 Cor. 7:10 , 12 , 25). So is John the apostle in the Apocalypse (*see* Rev. 1:8 , 11 , 17b–20 ; 2:1f. ; 22:7 , 12–16 , 20b). In view of this care, the New Testament critic is unjustified in assuming without substantive evidence that the Gospel record does not actually report what Jesus said and did.

Myths? It incorrectly assumes that the New Testament stories are like folklore and myth. There is a vast difference between the simple New Testament accounts of miracles and the embellished myths that did arise during the second and third centuries A.D., as can be seen by comparing the accounts. New Testament writers explicitly disavow myths. Peter declared: “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales (mythos) when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16). Paul also warned against belief in myths (1 Tim. 1:4 ; 4:7 ; 2 Tim. 4:4 ; Titus 1:14).

One of the most telling arguments against the myth view was given by C. S. Lewis:

First then, whatever these men may be as Biblical critics, I distrust them as critics. They seem to lack literary judgment, to be imperceptive about the very quality of the texts they are reading . . . If he tells me that something in a Gospel is legend or romance, I want to know how many legends and romances he had read, how well his palate is trained in detecting them by the flavour; not how many years he has spent on that Gospel . . . I have been reading poems, romances, vision-literature, legends, myths all my life. I know what they are like. I know that not one of them is like this. [Lewis, 154–55]

Creators or recorders? Unfounded higher criticism undermines the integrity of the New Testament writers by claiming that Jesus never said (or did) what the Gospels claim. Even some who call themselves evangelical have gone so far as to claim that what “ ‘Jesus said’ or ‘Jesus did’ need not always mean that in history Jesus said or did what follows, but sometimes may mean that in the account at least partly constructed by Matthew himself Jesus said or did what follows” (Gundry, 630). This clearly undermines confidence in the truthfulness of the Gospels and the accuracy of the events they report. On this critical view the Gospel writers become creators of the events, not recorders.

Of course, every careful biblical scholar knows that one Gospel writer does not always use the same words in reporting what Jesus said as does another. However, they always convey the same meaning. They do select, summarize, and paraphrase, but they do not distort. A comparison of the parallel reports in the Gospels is ample evidence of this.

There is no substantiation for the claim of one New Testament scholar that Matthew created the Magi story (Matt. 2) out of the turtledove story (of Luke 2). For according to Robert Gundry, Matthew “changes the sacrificial slaying of ‘a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons,’ at the presentation of the baby Jesus in the Temple (Luke 2:24 ; cf. Lev. 12:6–8), into Herod’s slaughtering of the babies in Bethlehem” (*ibid.*, 34–35). Such a view not only degrades the integrity of the Gospel writers but the authenticity and authority of the Gospel record. It is also silly.

Neither is there support for Paul K. Jewett, who went so far as to assert (Jewett, 134–35) that what the apostle Paul affirmed in 1 Corinthians 11:3 is wrong. If Paul is in error, then the time-honored truth that “what the Bible says, God says” is not so. Indeed, if Jewett is right, then even when one discovers what the author of Scripture is affirming, he is little closer to knowing the truth of God (cf. Gen. 3:1). If “what the Bible says, God says” (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR) is not so, then the divine authority of all Scripture is worthless.

The early church's stake in truth. That the early church had no real biographical interest is highly improbable. The New Testament writers, impressed as they were with the belief that Jesus was the long-promised Messiah, the Son of the living God (Matt. 16:16–18), had great motivation to accurately record what he actually said and did.

To say otherwise is contrary to their own clear statements. John claimed that “Jesus did” the things recorded in his Gospel (John 21:25). Elsewhere John said “What . . . we have heard, we have seen with our eyes, we beheld and our hands handled . . . we proclaim to you also” (1 John 1:1–2).

Luke clearly manifests an intense biographical interest by the earliest Christian communities when he wrote: “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the Word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught” (Luke 1:1–4). To claim, as the critics do, that the New Testament writers lacked interest in recording real history is implausible.

The work of the Holy Spirit. Such assumptions also neglect or deny the role of the Holy Spirit in activating the memories of the eyewitnesses. Much of the rejection of the Gospel record is based on the assumption that the writers could not be expected to remember sayings, details, and events twenty or forty years after the events. For Jesus died in 33, and the first Gospel records probably came (at latest) between 50 and 60 (Wenham, “Gospel Origins,” 112–34).

Again the critic is rejecting or neglecting the clear statement of Scripture. Jesus promised his disciples, “The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you” (John 14:26).

So even on the unlikely assumption that no one recorded anything Jesus said during his lifetime or immediately after, the critics would have us believe that eyewitnesses whose memories were later supernaturally activated by the Holy Spirit did not accurately record what Jesus did and said. It seems far more likely that the first-century eyewitnesses were right and the twentieth-century critics are wrong, than the reverse.

Guidelines for Biblical Criticism. Of course biblical scholarship need not be destructive. But the biblical message must be understood in its theistic (supernatural) context and its actual historical and grammatical setting. Positive guidelines for evangelical scholarship are set forth in Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics” (see Geisler, *Summit II: Hermeneutics*, 10–13. Also Radmacher and Preus, *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible*, esp. 881–914). It reads in part as follows:

Article XIII. WE AFFIRM that awareness of the literary categories, formal and stylistic, of the various parts of Scripture is essential for proper exegesis, and hence we value genre criticism as one of the many disciplines of biblical study. WE DENY that

generic categories which negate the historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.

Article XIV. WE AFFIRM that the biblical record of events, discourses and sayings, though presented in a variety of appropriate literary forms, corresponds to historical fact. WE DENY that any such event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated.

Article XV. WE AFFIRM the necessity of interpreting the Bible according to its literal, or normal sense. The literal sense is the grammatical-historical sense, that is, the meaning which the writer expressed. Interpretation according to the literal sense will account for all figures of speech and literary forms found in the text. WE DENY the legitimacy of any approach to Scripture that attributes to it meaning which the literal sense does not support.

Article XVI. WE AFFIRM that legitimate critical techniques should be used in determining the canonical text and its meaning. WE DENY the legitimacy of allowing any method of biblical criticism to question the truth or integrity of the writer’s expressed meaning, or of any other scriptural teaching.

Redaction versus Editing. There are important differences between destructive redaction and constructive editing. No knowledgeable scholars deny that a certain amount of editing occurred over the biblical text’s thousands of years of history. This legitimate editing, however, must be distinguished from illegitimate redaction which the negative critics allege. The negative critics have failed to present any convincing evidence that the kind of redaction they believe in has ever happened to the biblical text.

The following chart contrasts the two views.

Legitimate Editing	Illegitimate Redacting
Changes in form	Changes in content
Scribal changes	Substantive changes
Changes in the text	Changes in the truth

The redaction model of the canon confuses legitimate scribal activity, involving grammatical form, updating of names, and arrangement of prophetic material, with illegitimate redactive changes in actual content of a prophet’s message. It confuses acceptable scribal transmission with unacceptable tampering. It confuses proper discussion of which text is earlier with improper discussion of how later writers changed the truth of texts. There is no evidence that any significant illegitimate redactive changes have occurred since the Bible was first put in writing. On the contrary, all evidence supports a careful transmission in all substantial matters and in most details. No diminution of basic truth has occurred from the original writings to the Bibles in our hands today (see OLD TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ; NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS).

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Bible, Evidence for.

The Bible claims to be and proves to be the Word of God. It was written by prophets of God, under the inspiration of God.

Written by Prophets of God. The biblical authors were prophets and apostles of God (*see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ; PROPHECY AS PROOF OF BIBLE). There are many designations for prophet, and these are informative about their role in producing Scripture. They are called:

1. A *man of God* (1 Kings 12:22), meaning chosenness.
2. A *servant of the Lord* (1 Kings 14:18), indicating faithfulness.
3. A *messenger of the Lord* (Isa. 42:19), showing mission.
4. A *seer* (*ro'eh*), or *beholder* (*hozeh*) (Isa. 30:9–10), revealing insight from God.
5. A *man of the Spirit* (Hosea 9:7 KJV ; cf. Micah 3:8), noting spiritual indwelling.
6. A *watchman* (Ezek. 3:17), relating alertness for God.
7. A *prophet* (most frequently), marking a spokesman for God.

The work of a biblical prophet is described in vivid terms: "The Lord has spoken; who can but prophesy" (Amos 3:8). He is one who speaks "all the words which the Lord has spoken" (Exod. 4:30). God said to Moses of a prophet, "I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him" (Deut. 18:18). He added, "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take away from it" (Deut. 4:2). Jeremiah was commanded: "This is what the LORD says: Stand in the courtyard of the LORD 's house and speak to all the people. . . . Tell them everything I command you; do not omit a word" (Jer. 26:2).

A prophet was someone who said what God told him to say, no more and no less.

Moved by the Spirit of God. Throughout Scripture, the authors claimed to be under the direction of the Holy Spirit. David said, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke through me; his word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). Peter, speaking of the whole Old Testament, added, "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 Peter 1:21).

Not all prophets were known by that term. David and Solomon were kings. But they were mouthpieces of God, and David is called a "prophet" in Acts 2:29–39 . Moses was a lawgiver. He too was a prophet or spokesman for God (Deut. 18:18). Amos disclaimed the term "prophet," in that he was not a professional prophet, like Samuel and his "school of the prophets" (1 Sam. 19:20). Even if Amos was not a prophet by office, he was one by gift (cf. Amos 7:14). God used him to speak. Nor did all prophets speak in an explicit "Thus says the Lord" first-

person style. Those who wrote historical narrative spoke in an implied “Thus *did* the Lord” approach. Their message was about the acts of God in relation to the people and their sins. In each case God made the prophet a channel through which to convey his message to us.

Breathed Out by God. Writing about the entire Old Testament canon, the apostle Paul declared:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16–17). Jesus described the Scriptures as the very “word that comes out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4 , 7 , 10). They were written *by* men who spoke *from* God. Paul said his writings were “words . . . which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Cor. 2:13). As Jesus said to the Pharisees, “How is it then that David, *speaking by the Spirit* , calls him ‘Lord’?” (Matt. 22:43 , emphasis added).

What the Bible Says. The basic logic of the inerrancy of Scripture is offered in the article, Bible, Alleged errors in. That the Bible is God’s inerrant Word is expressed in several ways in Scripture. One is the formula, “What the Bible says, God says.” An Old Testament passage claims God said something, yet when this text is cited in the New Testament, the text tells us that the Scriptures said it. Sometimes the reverse is true. In the Old Testament it is said that the Bible records something. The New Testament declares that God said it. Consider this comparison:

What God Says . . .	the Bible Says
Genesis 12:3	Galatians 3:8
Exodus 9:16	Romans 9:17
What the Bible Says . . .	God Says
Genesis 2:24	Matthew 19:4 , 5
Psalms 2:1	Acts 4:24 , 25
Psalms 2:7	Hebrews 3:7
Psalms 16:10	Acts 13:35
Psalms 95:7	Hebrews 3:7
Psalms 97:7	Hebrews 3:7
Psalms 104:4	Hebrews 3:7
Isaiah 55:3	Acts 13:34

Scripture’s Claims. “*Thus Says the Lord.*” Phrases such as “thus says the Lord” (for example, Isa. 1:11 , 18 ; Jer. 2:3 , 5), “God said” (Gen. 1:3), and “the Word of the Lord came” (Jer. 34:1 ; Ezek. 30:1) are used hundreds of times in Scripture to stress God’s direct, verbal inspiration of what was written.

“*The Word of God.*” At some points the Bible claims, forthrightly and unequivocally, to be “the Word of God.” Referring to Old Testament commands, Jesus told the Jews of his day,

“Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition” (Matt. 15:6). Paul speaks of the Scriptures as “the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2). Peter declares, “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23). The writer of Hebrews affirms, “For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword” (Heb. 4:12).

The Claim of Divine Authority. Other words or phrases used in Scripture entail the claim of God’s authority. Jesus said the Bible will never pass away and is sufficient for faith and life (Luke 16:31 ; cf. 2 Tim. 3:16–17). He proclaimed that the Bible possesses divine inspiration (Matt. 22:43) and authority (Matt. 4:4 , 7 , 10). It has unity (Luke 24:27 ; John 5:39) and spiritual clarity (Luke 24:25).

The Extent of Its Biblical Authority. The extent of divine authority in Scripture includes:

1. all that is written— 2 Timothy 3:16 ;
2. even the very words— Matthew 22:43 ; 1 Corinthians 2:13 ;
3. and tenses of verbs— Matthew 22:32 ; Galatians 3:16 ;
4. including even the smallest parts of words— Matthew 5:17 , 18 .

Even though the Bible was not verbally dictated by God, the result is as perfectly God’s thoughts as if it had been. The Bible’s authors claimed that God is the source of the very words, since he supernaturally superintended the process by which each human wrote, using their vocabulary and style to record his message (2 Peter 1:20–21).

Presented in Human Terms. Although the Bible claims to be the Word of God, it is also the words of human beings. It claims to be God’s communication to people, in their own language and expressions.

First, every book in the Bible was the composition of *human writers* .

Second, the Bible manifests different *human literary styles*, from the mournful meter of lamentations to the exalted poetry of Isaiah, from the simple grammar of John to the complex Greek of Hebrews. Their choices of metaphors show that different writers used their own background and interests. James is interested in nature. Jesus uses urban metaphors, and Hosea those of rural life.

Third, the Bible manifests *human perspectives and emotions*; David spoke in Psalm 23 from a shepherd’s perspective; Kings is written from a prophetic vantage point, and Chronicles from a priestly point of view; Acts manifests a historical interest and 2 Timothy a pastor’s heart. Paul expressed grief over the Israelites who had rejected God (Rom. 9:2).

Fourth, the Bible reveals human thought patterns and processes, including reasoning (Romans) and memory (1 Cor. 1:14–16).

Fifth, writers of the Bible used human sources for information, including historical research (Luke 1:1–4) and noncanonical writings (Josh. 10:13 ; Acts 17:28 ; 1 Cor. 15:33 ; Titus 1:12 ; Jude 9 , 14).

Original Text Is Without Errors, Not the Copies. As noted in the article Bible, Alleged Errors in, this does not mean that every copy and translation of the Bible is perfect. God breathed out the originals, not the copies, so inerrancy applies to the original text, not to every copy. God in his providence preserved the copies from substantial error. In fact, the degree of accuracy is greater than that of any other book from the ancient world, exceeding 99 percent (*see* NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS ; OLD TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS).

The Overall Evidence. Considered as a totality, evidences for the Bible’s claim to be the Word of God are overwhelming.

The Testimony of Christ. Perhaps the strongest argument that the Bible is the Word of God is the testimony of Jesus (*see* BIBLE, JESUS’ VIEW OF). Even non-Christians believe he was a good teacher. Muslims believe him to be a true prophet of God (*see* MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED DIVINE CALL OF). Christians, of course, insist that he is the Son of God as he claimed to be (Matt. 16:16–18 ; Mark 2:5–11 ; John 5:22–30 ; 8:58 ; 10:30 ; 20:28–29) and proved to be by numerous miracles (John 3:2 ; Acts 2:22 ; *see* MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE). Even the *Qur’an* admits that Jesus did miracles (*see* MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED MIRACLES OF), and that the Bible Christians used in Muhammad’s day (A.D. seventh century) was accurate, since they were challenged to consult it to verify Muhammad’s claims.

Jesus affirmed the Old Testament to be the Word of God and promised to guide his disciples to know all truth. Jesus claimed for the Bible:

1. Divine authority— Matthew 4:4 , 7 , 10
2. Indestructibility— Matthew 5:17–18
3. Infallibility or unbreakability— John 10:35
4. Ultimate supremacy— Matthew 15:3 , 6
5. Factual inerrancy— Matthew 22:29 ; John 17:17
6. Historical reliability— Matthew 12:40 , 24:37–38
7. Scientific accuracy— Matthew 19:4–5 ; John 3:12

The authority of Jesus confirms the authority of the Bible. If he is the Son of God (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF), then the Bible is the Word of God. Indeed, if Jesus were merely a prophet, then the Bible still is confirmed to be the Word of God through his prophetic office. Only if one rejects the divine authority of Christ can he consistently reject the divine authority of the Scriptures. If Jesus is telling the truth, then it is true that the Bible is God’s Word.

Manuscript Evidence. New Testament manuscripts are now available from the third and fourth centuries, and fragments that may date back as far as the late first century. From these through the medieval centuries, the text remained substantially the same. There are earlier and more manuscripts for the New Testament than for any other book from the ancient world. While most books exist in ten or twenty manuscripts dating from a thousand years or more after they were composed, one nearly entire manuscript, the *Chester Beatty Papyri*, was copied in about 250. Another manuscript with the majority of the New Testament, called *Vaticanus*, is dated to about 325.

The Biblical Authors. Whatever weaknesses they may have had, the biblical authors are universally presented in Scripture as scrupulously honest, and this lends credibility to their claim, for the Bible is not shy to admit the failures of his people.

They taught the highest standard of ethics, including the obligation to always tell the truth. Moses’ law commanded: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor” (Exod. 20:16). Indeed, only one “whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart” (Ps. 15:2), who “has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong and casts no slur on his fellow-man, [and] who despises a vile man but honors those who fear the LORD , who keeps his oath even when it hurts” were considered righteous.

The New Testament also exalts integrity, commanding: “Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor” (Eph. 4:25). The person who “loves and practices falsehood” will be excluded from heaven, according to Revelation 22:15 . Absolute truthfulness was extolled as a cardinal Christian virtue.

The biblical writers not only taught the highest moral standards, including truthfulness, but they exemplified them in their lives. A true prophet could not be bought off. As one prophet who was tempted confessed, “I could not go beyond the command of the Lord” (Num. 22:18). What God spoke, the prophet had to declare, regardless of the consequences. Many prophets were threatened and even martyred but never recanted the truth. Jeremiah was put into prison for his unwelcome prophecies (Jer. 32:2 ; 37:15) and even threatened with death (Jer. 26:8 , 24). Others were killed (Matt. 23:34–36 ; Heb. 11:32–38). Peter and the eleven apostles (Acts 5), as well as Paul (Acts 28), were all imprisoned and most were eventually martyred for their testimony (2 Tim. 4:6–8 ; 2 Peter 1:14). Indeed, being “faithful unto death” was an earmark of early Christian conviction (Rev. 2:10).

People sometimes die for false causes they believe to be true, but few die for what they know to be false. Yet the biblical witnesses, who were in a position to know what was true, died for proclaiming that their message came from God. This is at least *prima facie* evidence that the Bible is what they claimed it to be—the Word of God.

The Miraculous Confirmation. It is always possible that someone believes he or she speaks for God and does not. There are false prophets (Matt. 7:15). This is why the Bible exhorts: “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). One sure way a true prophet can be distinguished from a false one is miracles (Acts 2:22 ; Heb. 2:3–4). A miracle is

an act of God, and God would not supernaturally confirm a false prophet to be a true one (*see* MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ; PROPHECIES AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE).

When Moses was called of God, he was given miracles to prove he spoke for God (Exodus 4). Elijah on Mount Carmel was confirmed by fire from heaven to be a true prophet of the true God (1 Kings 18). Even Nicodemus acknowledged to Jesus, “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him” (John 3:2).

Even the *Qur’an* recognized that God confirmed his prophets (sura 7:106–8, 116–119), including Jesus, by miracles. God is said to have told Muhammad, “If they reject thee, so were rejected apostles before thee, who came with clear signs” (sura 17:103). Allah says, “Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron, with Our signs and authority manifest” (sura 23:45). Interestingly, when Muhammad was challenged by unbelievers to perform like miracles, he refused (see sura 2:118; 3:183; 4:153; 6:8, 9, 37). In Muhammad’s own words (from the *Qur’an*), “They [will] say: ‘Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?’” since even Muhammad admitted that “God hath certainly power to send down a sign” (sura 6:37; *see* MUHAMMAD, ALLEGED MIRACLES OF ; QUR’AN, ALLEGED DIVINE ORIGIN OF). But miracles were a mark of Jesus’ ministry, as of other prophets and apostles (Heb. 2:3–4 ; 2 Cor. 12:12 ; *see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF). When asked by John the Baptist if he was the Messiah, Jesus responded, “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached” (Luke 7:20–22).

Miracles, then, are a divine confirmation of a prophet’s claim to be speaking for God (*see* MIRACLE). But of all the world’s religious leaders, only the Judeo-Christian prophets and apostles were supernaturally confirmed by genuine miracles of nature that could not possibly have been self-delusion or trickery. Confirming miracles included the turning of water into wine (John 2), healing of those with organic sicknesses (John 5), multiplying food (John 6), walking on water (John 6), and raising the dead (John 11).

Muslims allege that Muhammad did miracles, but there is no support for this claim, even in the *Qur’an* (for his refusal to do miracles, see sura 3:181–84; *see* MUHAMMAD, CHARACTER OF). Only the Bible is supernaturally confirmed.

Predictions by Biblical Prophets. Unlike any other book, the Bible offers specific predictions that were written hundreds of years in advance of their literal fulfillment. Many of these center around the coming of Christ and others around world events. For a discussion of a number of these, *see* PROPHECY AS PROOF OF THE BIBLE . While Bible critics play with the dating of Old Testament books to claim that predictions were written after their fulfillment, these claims abuse credibility. In some cases of more recent fulfillment no such claims are even possible. These fulfillments stand as a mark of the Bible’s unique, supernatural origin.

The Unity of the Bible. One supporting line of evidence for the Bible’s divine origin is its unity in great diversity. Even though composed by many people of diverse backgrounds over many years, Scripture speaks from one mind.

Not taking into account unknowns in the dating for Job and sources Moses could have used, the first book was written no later than 1400 B.C . and the last shortly before A.D . 100. In all there are sixty-six different books, written by perhaps forty different authors of different backgrounds, educational levels, and occupations. Most was written originally in Hebrew or Greek, with some small portion in Aramaic.

The Bible covers hundreds of topics in literature of widely varying styles. These include history, poetry, didactic literature, parable, allegory, apocalyptic, and epic.

Yet note the amazing unity. These sixty-six books unfold one continuous drama of redemption, paradise lost to paradise regained, creation to the consummation of all things (see Sauer). There is one central theme, the person of Jesus Christ, even by implication in the Old Testament (Luke 24:27). In the Old Testament Christ is anticipated; in the New Testament he is realized (Matt. 5:17–18). There is one message: Humankind’s problem is sin, and the solution is salvation through Christ (Mark 10:45 ; Luke 19:10).

Such incredible unity is best accounted for by the existence of a divine Mind that the writers of Scripture claimed inspired them. This Mind wove each of their pieces into one mosaic of truth.

Critics claim this is not so amazing, considering that succeeding authors were aware of preceding ones. Hence, they could build upon these texts without contradicting them. Or, later generations only accepted their book into the growing canon because it seemed to fit.

But not all writers were aware that their book would come to be in the canon (for example, Song of Solomon and the multiauthor Proverbs). They could not have slanted their writing to the way that would best fit. There was no one point when books were accepted into the canon. Even though some later generations raised questions as to how a book came to be in the canon, there is evidence that books were accepted immediately by the contemporaries of the writers. When Moses wrote, his books were placed by the ark (Deut. 31:22–26). Later, Joshua was added, and Daniel had copies of these works, plus even the scroll of his contemporary Jeremiah (Dan. 9:2). In the New Testament, Paul cites Luke (1 Tim. 5:18 , cf. Luke 10:7), and Peter possessed at least some of Paul’s Epistles (2 Peter 3:15–16). While not every Christian everywhere possessed every book immediately, it does seem that some writings were accepted and distributed immediately. Perhaps others were disseminated more slowly, after they were determined to be authentic.

Even if every author possessed every earlier book, there is still a unity that transcends human ability. The reader might assume that each author was an incredible literary genius who saw both the broader unity and “plan” of Scripture and just how his piece would fit in it. Could even such geniuses write so that the unforeseen end would come out, even though they could not know precisely what that end would be? It is easier to posit a superintending Mind behind the whole who devised the plot and from the beginning planned how it would unfold.

Suppose a book of family medical advice was composed by forty doctors over 1500 years in different languages on hundreds of medical topics. What kind of unity would it have, even

assuming that authors knew what preceding ones had written? Due to superstitious medical practice in the past, one chapter would say that disease is caused by demons who must be exorcised. Another would claim that disease is in the blood and must be drained by blood-letting. Another would claim disease to be a function of mind over matter. At best, such a book would lack unity, continuity, and usefulness. It would hardly be a definitive source covering the causes and cures of disease. Yet the Bible, with greater diversity, is still sought by millions for its solutions to spiritual maladies. It alone, of all books known to humankind, needs a God to account for its unity in diversity.

Archaeological Confirmation. Archaeology cannot directly prove the Bible's inspiration; it can confirm its reliability as an historical document. This is an indirect confirmation of inspiration. (See ARCHAEOLOGY, NEW TESTAMENT , and ARCHAEOLOGY, OLD TESTAMENT , for some of this evidence.) The conclusion of that evidence was summed up by Nelson Glueck that "no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible" (Glueck, 31). Millar Burroughs notes that "more than one archaeologist has found his respect for the Bible increased by the experience of excavation in Palestine" (Burroughs, 1).

Testimonies of Transforming Power. The writer of Hebrews declares that "the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword" (4:12). The apostle Peter added, "For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). While not in the area of primary evidence, a subjective, supporting line of evidence is the change in life that God's Word brings. While early Islam spread by the power of the sword, early Christianity spread by the sword of the Spirit, even as Christians were being killed by the power of the Roman sword.

The great Christian apologist William Paley summarized the differences between the growth of Christianity and Islam vividly:

For what are we comparing? A Galilean peasant accompanied by a few fishermen with a conqueror at the head of his army. We compare Jesus, without force, without power, without support, without one external circumstance of attraction or influence, prevailing against the prejudices, the learning, the hierarchy, of his country, against the ancient religious opinions, the pompous religious rites, the philosophy, the wisdom, the authority of the Roman empire, in the most polished and enlightened period of its existence,—with Mahomet making his way amongst Arabs; collecting followers in the midst of conquests and triumphs, in the darkest ages and countries of the world, and when success in arms not only operated by that command of men's wills and persons which attend prosperous undertakings, but was considered as a sure testimony of Divine approbation. That multitudes, persuaded by this argument, should join the train of a victorious chief; that still greater multitudes should, without any argument, bow down before irresistible power—is a conduct in which we cannot see much to surprise us; in which we can see nothing that resembles the causes by which the establishment of Christianity was effected. [Paley, 257]

Despite the later misuse of military power in the Crusades and at isolated times earlier, the fact is that *early* Christianity grew by its spiritual power, not by political force. From the very beginning, as it is today around the world, it was the preaching of the Word of God which transformed lives that gave Christianity its vitality (Acts 2:41). For "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Conclusion. The Bible is the only book that both claims and proves to be the Word of God. It claims to be written by prophets of God who recorded in their own style and language exactly the message God wanted them to give to humankind. The writings of the prophets and apostles claim to be the unbreakable, imperishable, and inerrant words of God. The evidence that their writings are what they claimed to be is found not only in their own moral character but in the supernatural confirmation of their message, its prophetic accuracy, its amazing unity, its transforming power, and the testimony of Jesus who was confirmed to be the Son of God.

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Bible, Islamic View of. Muslims believe that the *Qur'an* is the Word of God, superseding all previous revelations. To maintain this belief, they must sustain an attack upon the competing claims of their chief rival, the Bible.

The Attack on the Bible. Muslim accusations against the Bible fall into two basic categories: first, the text of Scripture has been changed or forged; second, doctrinal mistakes have crept into Christian teaching, such as the belief in the incarnation of Christ, the triunity of the Godhead, and the doctrine of original sin (Waardenburg, 261–63).

Praise for the Original Bible. Strangely, sometimes the *Qur'an* gives the Judeo-Christian Scriptures such noble titles as: “the Book of God,” “the Word of God,” “a light and guidance to man,” “a decision for all matters,” “a guidance and mercy,” “the lucid Book,” “the illumination (*al-furqan*),” “the gospel with its guidance and light, confirming the preceding Law,” and “a guidance and warning to those who fear God” (Tackle, 217). Christians are told to look into their own Scriptures to find God’s revelation for them (5:50). And even Muhammad himself at one point is exhorted to test the truthfulness of his own message by the contents of the previous divine revelations to Jews and Christians (10:94).

The Bible Set Aside. This praise for the Bible is misleading, since Muslims hasten to claim that the *Qur'an* supersedes previous revelations, based on their concept of progressive revelation. By this they hope to show that the *Qur'an* fulfills and sets aside the less complete revelations, such as the Bible. One Islamic theologian echoes this conviction by stating that while a Muslim needs to believe in the Torah (Law of Moses), the *Zabur* (the Psalms of David), and the *Injil* (Gospels), nevertheless “according to the most eminent theologians” the books in their present state “have been tampered with.” He goes on to say, “It is to be believed that the *Qur'an* is the noblest of the books. . . . It is the last of the God-given scriptures to come down, it abrogates all the books which preceded it. . . . It is impossible for it to suffer any change or alteration” (Jeffery, 126–28). Even though this is the most common view among Islamic scholars, still many Muslims claim to believe in the sacredness and truthfulness of the present-day Bible. This, however, is largely lip-service due to their firm belief in the all-sufficiency of the *Qur'an*. Very few ever study the Bible.

Against the Old Testament. Muslims often show a less favorable view of the Old Testament, which they believe has been distorted by the teachers of the law. The charges include: concealing God’s Word (sura 2:42; 3:71), verbally distorting the message in their books (sura 3:78; 4:46), not believing in all the parts of their Scriptures (sura 2:85), and not knowing what their own Scriptures really teach (sura 2:78). Muslims have included Christians in these criticisms.

Due to the ambiguities in the *Qur'anic* accounts, Muslims hold various views (that are sometimes in conflict) regarding the Bible. For instance, the well-known Muslim reformer, Muhammad Abduh writes, “The Bible, the New Testament and the *Qur'an* are three concordant books; religious men study all three and respect them equally. Thus the divine teaching is completed, and the true religion shines across the centuries” (Dermenghem, 138). Another Muslim author tries to harmonize the three great world religions in this way: “Judaism lays stress on Justice and Right; Christianity, on Love and Charity; Islam, on Brotherhood and Peace”

(Waddy, 116). However, the most typical Islamic approach to this subject is characterized by comments of the Muslim apologist, Ajjijola:

The first five books of the Old Testament do not constitute the original Torah, but parts of the Torah have been mingled up with other narratives written by human beings and the original guidance of the Lord is lost in that quagmire. Similarly, the four Gospels of Christ are not the original Gospels as they came from Prophet Jesus . . . the original and the fictitious, the Divine and the human are so intermingled that the grain cannot be separated from the chaff. The fact is that the original Word of God is preserved neither with the Jews nor with the Christians. The *Qur'an*, on the other hand, is fully preserved and not a jot or tittle has been changed or left out in it. [Ajjijola, 79]

These charges bring us once again to the Islamic doctrine of *tahrif*, or corruption of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. Based on some of the above *Qur'anic* verses and, more important, exposure to the actual contents of other scriptures, Muslim theologians have generally formulated two responses. According to Nazir-Ali “the early Muslim commentators (e.g., Al-Tabari and Ar-Razi) believed that the alteration is *tahrif bi'al ma'ni*, a corruption of the meaning of the text without tampering with the text itself. Gradually, the dominant view changed to *tahrif bi'al-lafz*, corruption of the text itself” (Nazir-Ali, 46). The Spanish theologians Ibn-Hazm, and Al-Biruni, along with most Muslims, hold this view.

Another *Qur'anic* scholar claims that “the biblical Torah was apparently not identical with the pure *tawrat* [law] given as a revelation to Moses, but there was considerable variation in opinion on the question to what extent the former scriptures were corrupted.” On the one hand, “Ibn-Hazm, who was the first thinker to consider the problem of *tabdil* [change] systematically, contended . . . that the text itself had been changed or forged (*taghyr*), and he drew attention to immoral stories which had found a place within the corpus.” On the other hand, “Ibn-Khaldun held that the text itself had not been forged but that Jews and Christians had misinterpreted their scripture, especially those texts which predicted or announced the mission of Muhammad and the coming of Islam” (Waardenburg, 257).

Whether a Muslim scholar shows more or less respect for the Bible, and whether or how he will quote from it depends on his particular interpretation of *tabdil*. Ibn-Hazm, for instance, rejects nearly the whole Old Testament as a forgery, but cheerfully quotes the *tawrat*’s bad reports of the faith and behavior of the *Banu Isra'il* as proofs against the Jews and their religion.

Against the New Testament. Noted Muslim commentator Yusuf Ali contends that “the *Injil* spoken of by the *Qur'an* is not the New Testament. It is not the four Gospels now received as canonical. It is the single Gospel which, Islam teaches, was revealed to Jesus, and which he taught. Fragments of it survive in the received canonical Gospels and in some others of which traces survive” (Ali, 287). Direct allegations against New Testament and Christian teaching are made. These include the charges that there have been a change and forgery of textual divine revelation, and that there have been doctrinal mistakes, such as the belief in the incarnation of Christ, the Trinity, the godhead, and the doctrine of original sin (Waardenburg, 261–63).

Debated among Muslim theologians is the question of the eternal destiny of the people of the Book. Although the average Muslim might consider anyone who has been a “good person” worthy of salvation, accounting for all the qur’anic evidences on this subject has created much uncertainty.

Among classical Muslim theologians, Jews and Christians were generally regarded as unbelievers (*kafar*) because of their rejection of Muhammad as a true prophet of God. For example, in the qur’anic commentary of Tabari, one of the most respected Muslim commentators of all time, we notice that, even though the author distinguishes between the people of the book and the polytheists (*mushrikun*) and expresses a higher opinion of the former, he clearly declares that the majority of Jews and Christians are in unbelief and transgression because of their refusal to acknowledge Muhammad’s truthfulness (Antes, 104–5).

Added to this is the charge against Christian belief in the divinity of Christ as the Son of God (see CHRIST, DEITY OF), a belief that amounts to committing the unpardonable sin of *shirk*, and is emphatically condemned throughout the *Qur’an*. The condemnation of Christians is captured in 5:75: “They do blaspheme who say: ‘God is Christ the son of Mary.’ . . . Whoever joins other gods with God, God will forbid him the Garden, and the Fire will be his abode.”

On the other hand the contemporary Muslim theologian, Falzur Rahman, goes against what he admits is “the vast majority of Muslim commentators.” He champions the opinion that salvation is not acquired by formally joining the Muslim faith, but as the *Qur’an* points out, by believing in God and the last day and doing good deeds (Rahman, 166–67). The debate continues and each individual Muslim can take a different side of this issue based on his own understanding.

A Response to Islamic Charges. One evidence that these Islamic views are critically flawed is the internal inconsistency within the Muslim view of Scripture itself. Another is that it is contrary to the facts.

Tension within the Islamic View of the Bible. There is serious tension in the Islamic rejection of the authenticity of the current New Testament. This tension can be focused by the following teachings from the *Qur’an*:

The original New Testament (“Gospel”) is a revelation of God (sura 5:46, 67, 69, 71).

Jesus was a prophet and his words should be believed by Muslims (sura 4:171; 5:78). As the Muslim scholar Mufassir notes, “Muslims believe all prophets to be truthful because they are commissioned in the service of humanity by Almighty God (Allah)” (Mufassir, i).

Christians were obligated to accept the New Testament of Muhammad’s day (A.D. seventh century; sura 10:94).

In sura 10, Muhammad is told: “If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book [the Bible] from before thee; the truth hath indeed come to thee from thy Lord; so be in no wise of those in doubt.” Abdul-Haqq notes that “the learned doctors of Islam are sadly embarrassed by this verse, referring the prophet as it does

to the people of the Book who would solve his doubts” (Abdul-Haqq, 23). One of the strangest interpretations is that the sura is actually addressed to those who question his claim. Others claim that “it was Muhammad himself who is addressed, but, however much they change and turn the compass, it ever points to the same celestial pole—the purity and preservation of the Scriptures.” However, Abdul-Haqq adds, “If again, we take the party addressed to be those who doubted the truth of Islam, this throws open the whole foundation of the prophet’s mission; regarding which they are referred to the Jews [or Christians] for an answer to their doubts; which would only strengthen the argument for the authority of the Scripture—a result the Muslim critics would hardly be prepared for” (ibid., 100).

Christians respond that Muhammad would not have asked them to accept a corrupted version of the New Testament. Also, the New Testament of Muhammad’s day is substantially identical to the New Testament today, since today’s New Testament is based on manuscripts that go back several centuries before Muhammad (see NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS). Hence, by the logic of this verse, Muslims should accept the authenticity of today’s Bible. But if they do, then they should accept the doctrines of the deity of Christ (see CHRIST, DEITY OF) and the Trinity, since that is what the New Testament teaches. However, Muslims categorically reject these teachings, creating a dilemma within the Islamic view.

Another inconsistency within the qur’anic view of the Bible is that Muslims claim the Bible to be “the Word of God” (2:75). Muslims also insist that God’s words cannot be altered or changed. But, as Pfander points out, “if both these statements are correct . . . then it follows that the Bible has not been changed and corrupted either before or since Muhammad’s time” (Pfander, 101). However, Islamic teaching insists that the Bible has been corrupted, thus the contradiction.

As Islamic scholar Richard Bell pointed out, it is unreasonable to suppose that Jews and Christians would conspire to change the Old Testament. For “their [the Jews’] feeling towards the Christians had always been hostile” (Bell, 164–65). Why would two hostile parties (Jews and Christians), who shared a common Old Testament, conspire to change it to support the views of a common enemy, the Muslims? It does not make any sense. What is more, at the supposed time of the textual changes, Jews and Christians were spread all over the world, making the supposed collaboration to corrupt the text impossible. And the number of copies of the Old Testament in circulation were too numerous for the changes to be uniform. Also, there is no mention of any such changes by former Jews or Christians of the time who became Muslims, something that they surely would have done if it were true (see McDowell, 52–53).

Contrary to the Factual Evidence. Furthermore, Muslim’s rejection of the New Testament is contrary to the overwhelming manuscript evidence. All the Gospels are preserved in the Chester Beatty Papyri, copied in about 250. And the entire New Testament exists in Vaticanus Ms. (B) which dates from about 325–50. There are more than 5300 other manuscripts of the New Testament (see NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS), dating from the second century to the fifteenth century (hundreds of which are from before Muhammad) which confirm that we have substantially the same text of the whole New Testament as existed in Muhammad’s day. These manuscripts also confirm that the text is the same basic New Testament text as was written in the first century. These manuscripts provide an unbroken chain of testimony. For example, the

earliest fragment of the New Testament, the John Ryland Fragment, is dated about 117–38. It preserves verses from John 18 just as they are found in today's New Testament. Likewise, the Bodmer Papyrus from ca. 200 preserves whole books of Peter and Jude as we have them today. Most of the New Testament, including the Gospels, is in the Beatty Papyrus, and the entire New Testament is in Vaticanus from about 325. There is absolutely no evidence that the New Testament message was destroyed or distorted, as Muslims claim it was (see Geisler and Nix, chap. 22).

Finally, Muslims use liberal critics of the New Testament to show that the New Testament was corrupted, misplaced, and outdated. However, the late liberal New Testament scholar John A. T. Robinson concluded that the Gospel record was written well within the lives of the apostles, between A.D. 40 and 60 (see NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF ; BIBLE CRITICISM). Former Bultmannian New Testament critic Eta Linnemann has more recently concluded that the position that the New Testament as preserved in the manuscripts does not accurately preserve the words and deeds of Jesus, is no longer defensible. She writes: "As time passes, I become more and more convinced that to a considerable degree New Testament criticism as practiced by those committed to historical-critical theology does not deserve to be called science" (Linnemann, 9). She adds, "The Gospels are not works of literature that creatively reshape already finished material after the manner in which Goethe reshaped the popular book about Dr. Faust" (ibid., 104). Rather, "Every Gospel presents a complete, unique testimony. It owes its existence to direct or indirect eyewitnesses" (ibid., 194).

Further, the use of these liberal critics by Muslim apologists undermines their own view of the *Qur'an*. Muslim writers are fond of quoting the conclusions of liberal critics of the Bible without serious consideration as to their presuppositions. The antisupernaturalism that led liberal critics of the Bible to deny that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, noting the different words for God used in different passages, would likewise argue that the *Qur'an* did not come from Muhammad. For the *Qur'an* also uses different names for God in different places. *Allah* is used for God in suras 4, 9, 24, 33, but *Rab* is used in suras 18, 23 and 25 (Harrison, 517). Muslims seem blissfully unaware that the views of these critics are based on an antisupernatural bias that, if applied to the *Qur'an* and the *hadith*, would destroy basic Muslim beliefs as well. In short, Muslims cannot consistently appeal to criticism of the New Testament based on the belief that miracles do not occur, unless they wish to undermine their own faith.

Conclusion. If Christians in Muhammad's day were obligated to accept the New Testament, and if abundant manuscript evidence confirms that the New Testament of today is essentially the same, then, according to the teachings of the *Qur'an* itself, Christians are obligated to accept the teachings of the New Testament. But the New Testament today affirms that Jesus is the Son of God, who died on the cross for our sins and rose again three days later. But this is contrary to the *Qur'an*. Thus, Muslim rejection of the authenticity of the New Testament is inconsistent with their own belief in the inspiration of the *Qur'an*.

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Bible, Jesus' View of. Jesus' view of the Bible is a crucial link in the chain of argument that the Bible is the Word of God (see BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR). The progression (see APOLOGETICS, ARGUMENT OF) runs:

1. Truth about reality is knowable (see TRUTH, NATURE OF ; AGNOSTICISM).
2. Opposites cannot both be true (see FIRST PRINCIPLES ; LOGIC).
3. The theistic God exists (see GOD, EVIDENCE FOR).

4. Miracles are possible (*see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST).
5. Miracles confirm truth claims of a prophet of God (*see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF).
6. New Testament documents are historically reliable (*see* NEW TESTAMENT, DATING OF ; NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS, RELIABILITY OF and NEW TESTAMENT, HISTORICITY OF).
7. As witnessed by the New Testament, Jesus claimed to be God (*see* CHRIST, DEITY OF).
8. Jesus' claim to be God was confirmed by miracles (*see* MIRACLES, APOLOGETIC VALUE OF ; MIRACLES IN THE BIBLE ; RESURRECTION, EVIDENCE FOR).
9. Therefore, Jesus is God.
10. Whatever Jesus (who is God) affirmed is true, is true (*see* GOD, NATURE OF).
11. Jesus, who is God, affirmed the Bible is the Word of God.
12. Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God and whatever is opposed to any biblical teaching is false (*see* WORLD RELIGIONS AND CHRISTIANITY ; PLURALISM, RELIGIOUS).

What Jesus Affirmed about the Bible. Step 9 is crucial to the overall argument. If Jesus is the Son of God, then what he affirmed about the Bible is true. And Jesus affirmed that the Bible is the infallible, indestructible, inerrant Word of God (*see* BIBLE, ALLEGED ERRORS IN).

What Jesus Affirmed about the Old Testament. The New Testament was not written until after Jesus ascended into heaven. Hence, his statements about the Bible refer to the Old Testament. But what Jesus confirmed for the Old Testament, he also promised for the New Testament.

Jesus affirmed the divine authority of the Old Testament. Jesus and his disciples used the phrase “it is written” more than ninety times. It is usually in the perfect tense, meaning, “it was written in the past and it still stands as the written Word of God.” Often Jesus used in the sense of “this is the last word on the topic. The discussion is over.” Such is the case when Jesus resisted the temptation of the Devil.

But he answered and said, *It is written* , Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. . . . Jesus said unto him, *It is written* again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Jesus said to him, It is again written, Thou shalt not tempt [the] Lord thy God. . . . Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for *it is written* , Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. [Matt. 4:4 , 7 , 10 , emphasis added]

This use demonstrates that Jesus believed the Bible to have final and divine authority.

Jesus affirmed the Old Testament to be imperishable. “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, to fulfill. Think not that I am come to make void the law or the prophets. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matt. 5:17–18). Jesus believed the Old Testament to be the imperishable Word of the eternal God.

Jesus affirmed the Old Testament to be inspired. Although Jesus never used the word *inspiration* , he did use its equivalent. To the Pharisees' question, he retorted: “How is it then that David, *speaking by the Spirit* , calls him ‘Lord’?” (Matt. 22:43 , emphasis added). Indeed, David himself said of his own words, “The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me; his word was on my tongue” (2 Sam. 23:2). This is precisely what is meant by inspiration.

Jesus affirmed that the Bible is unbreakable. The word *infallible* is not used in the New Testament, but a close cousin is—*unbreakable* . Jesus said, “If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and *the scripture cannot be broken* ” (John 10:35). Indeed, three powerful words describe the Old Testament in this short passage: “law” (vs. 34) , “word of God,” and “unbreakable.” Thus, Jesus believed that the Old Testament was the unbreakable law of God.

Jesus affirmed the Old Testament is the Word of God. Jesus regarded the Bible as the “Word of God.” He insisted elsewhere that it contained the “commandment of God” (Matt 15:3 , 6). The same truth is implied in his reference to its indestructibility in Matthew 5:17–18 . Elsewhere, Jesus' disciples call it “the oracles of God” (Rom. 3:2 ; Heb. 5:12).

Jesus ascribed ultimate supremacy to the Old Testament. Jesus often asserted the ultimate authority and supremacy of the Old Testament over all human teaching or “tradition.” He said to the Jews: “Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? . . . Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition” (Matt. 15:3 , 6). Jesus believed that the Bible alone has supreme authority when even the most revered of all human teachings conflict with it. Scripture alone is God's supreme written authority.

Jesus affirmed the inerrancy of the Old Testament. *Inerrancy* means without error. That concept is found in Jesus' answer to the Sadducees, a sect who denied the divine inspiration of the Old Testament, “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures [which do not err], nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:29 KJV). In his high priestly prayer, Jesus affirmed the total truthfulness of Scripture, saying to the Father, “Sanctify them through thy truth: *thy word is truth* ” (John 17:17 KJV).

Jesus affirmed the historical reliability of the Old Testament. Jesus affirmed as historically true some of the most disputed passages of the Old Testament, including the creation of Adam and Eve (Matt. 19:4–5), the miracle about Jonah in the great fish, and destruction of the world by a flood in the days of Noah. Of the latter, Jesus declared: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark” (Matt. 24:37–38). Jesus affirmed that Jonah was really swallowed by a great fish for three days and three nights: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will

be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matt. 12:40). Jesus also spoke of the slaying of Abel (1 John 3:12), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Matt. 8:11), the miracles of Elijah (James 5:17), and many other Old Testament persons and events as historically true, including Moses, Isaiah, David, and Solomon (Matt. 12:42), and Daniel the prophet (Matt. 24:15). He affirmed the historical reliability of major disputed passages of the Old Testament. Both the manner in which these events are cited, the authority they are given, and the basis they form for major teachings Jesus gave about his life, death, and resurrection reveals that he understood these events as historical.

Jesus affirmed the scientific accuracy of the Old Testament. The most scientifically disputed chapters of the Bible are the first eleven (*see* SCIENCE AND BIBLE). Yet Jesus affirmed the account throughout this section of Genesis. He unflinchingly bases his moral teaching about marriage on the literal truth of the creation of Adam and Eve. He said to the Pharisees, “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?’” (Matt. 19:4–5). After speaking to Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, about physical earthly things like birth and wind, Jesus declared: “I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?” (John 3:12). In short, Jesus said that, unless one could believe him when he spoke of empirical scientific matters, then they should not believe him when he speaks of heavenly matters—revealing that he considered them inseparable.

What Jesus promised about the New Testament. Jesus not only affirmed the divine authority and infallibility of the Old Testament, he also promised the same for the New Testament. And his apostles and New Testament prophets claimed for their writings what Jesus had promised them (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR).

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would teach “all truth.” Jesus promised that “the Comforter, [which is] the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you *all things*, and bring *all things* to your remembrance, *whatsoever I have said* unto you.” He added, “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into *all truth*: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, [that] shall he speak” (John 14:26 ; 16:13 , emphasis added). This promise was fulfilled when they spoke and later recorded (in the New Testament) everything Jesus had taught them.

The apostles claimed this divine authority Jesus gave them. Not only did Jesus promise his disciples divine authority in what they wrote, but the apostles claimed this authority for their writings. John said, “these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31). He added, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). Again, he said, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. . . . They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:1 , 5–6).

Likewise, the apostle Peter acknowledged all Paul’s writing as “Scripture” (2 Peter 3:15–16 ; cf. 2 Tim. 3:15–16), saying, “And account [that] the longsuffering of our Lord [is] salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you. As also in all [his] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as [they do] also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.”

The New Testament is the record of apostolic teaching. But the New Testament is the only authentic record of apostolic teachings which we have. Each book was written by an apostle or New Testament prophet (Eph. 2:20 ; 3:3–5).

Therefore, the New Testament is the “all truth” Jesus promised. From the fact that Jesus promised to lead his disciples into “all truth” and they both claimed this promise and recorded this truth in the New Testament, we may conclude that Jesus’ promise was finally fulfilled in the inspired New Testament. In this way, Jesus directly confirmed the inspiration and divine authority of the Old Testament and promised the same, indirectly, for the New Testament. Therefore, if Christ is the Son of God, then both the Old Testament and the New Testament are the Word of God.

Jesus and the Critics. Jesus confessed the very things many modern critics deny about the Old Testament (*see* BIBLE CRITICISM). If Jesus was right, then the critics are wrong, despite the pretense of having scholarship on their side. For if Jesus is the Son of God, then it is a matter of Lordship, not a matter of scholarship.

Negative critics of the Bible claim that Daniel was not a predictive prophet, but only a historian recording the events after they happened (ca. 165 B.C.). Jesus, however, agreed with the conservative view, declaring Daniel to be a prophet (*see* DANIEL, DATING OF). Indeed, Jesus cited a prediction that Daniel made that had not yet occurred in Jesus’ day. In his Mount Olivet Discourse he said, “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’ spoken of through *the prophet Daniel* . . .” (Matt. 24:15 , emphasis added). “See, I have told you ahead of time” (Matt. 24:25).

Many critics assert that the first human beings evolved by natural processes. But, as already noted, Jesus insisted that Adam and Eve were created by God (Matt. 19:4–5 ; *see* ADAM, HISTORICITY OF). If Jesus is the Son of God, then the choice is between Charles Darwin and the divine; between a nineteenth-century creature and the eternal Creator.

Most negative critics of the Bible believe that the Jonah story is mythology (*see* MYTHOLOGY AND THE NEW TESTAMENT). Indeed, with strong emphasis Jesus asserted that “just as” Jonah was in the great fish three days and nights, “even so” he would be in the grave for three days and nights. Surely, Jesus would not have based the historicity of his death and resurrection on mythology about Jonah.

Bible critics often deny there was a world-wide flood in the days of Noah (*see* SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE). But, as was seen above, Jesus affirmed there was a flood in the days of Noah in which all but Noah’s family perished (Matt. 24:38–39 ; cf. 1 Peter 3:20 ; 2 Peter 3:5–6).

It is common for biblical critics to teach that there were at least two Isaiahs, one of whom lived after the events described in the latter chapters (40–66) and the other of which lived earlier and wrote chapters 1 to 39 . But Jesus quoted from both sections of the book as the writing of “the prophet Isaiah” (*see* ISAIAH, DEUTERO). In Luke 4:17 Jesus cited the last part of Isaiah (61:1), reading: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor” (Luke 4:17–18). In Mark 7:6 Jesus cited from the first section of Isaiah (29:13), saying, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ‘These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me’ ” (Mark 7:6). Jesus’ disciple John made it unmistakably clear that there was only one Isaiah by citing from both sections of Isaiah (chapters 53 and 6) in the same passage, claiming of the second that the same “Isaiah said again” (John 12:37–41).

The negative critic of the Bible does well to ask: Who knew more about the Bible, Christ or the critics? The dilemma is this: If Jesus is the Son of God, then the Bible is the Word of God. Conversely, if the Bible is not the Word of God, then Jesus is not the Son of God (since he taught false doctrine).

In spite of the forthright proclamations of Christ about the Scriptures many critics believe that he was not really affirming but only accommodating himself to the false beliefs of the Jews of his day about the Old Testament. But this hypothesis is clearly contrary to the facts (*see* ACCOMMODATION THEORY). Others believe that since Jesus was only a human being that he made mistakes, some of which were about the origin and nature of Scripture. But this speculation too is not rooted in the facts of the matter (see *ibid.*). Jesus neither accommodated false beliefs (cf. Matt. 5:21–22 , 27–28 ; 22:29 ; 23:1f .) nor was he limited in his authority to teach the truth of God (cf. Matt. 28:18–20 ; 7:29 ; John 12:48).

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Bible and Science. *See* SCIENCE AND THE BIBLE .

Big Bang Theory. Big bang cosmology is a widely accepted theory regarding the origin of the universe (*see* EVOLUTION, COSMIC), according to which the material universe or cosmos exploded into being some 15 billion years ago. Since then the universe has been expanding and developing according to conditions set at the moment of its origin. Had these conditions been different in the slightest degree, the world and life as we know it, including human life, would never have developed. The fact that conditions necessary for and favorable to the emergence of human life were determined from the very instant of the original cosmic explosion is called the *anthropic principle* .

Evidence for the Big Bang. British astronomer Stephen Hawking stated the issue well: “So long as the universe had a beginning, we could suppose it had a creator. But if the universe is really completely self-contained, having no boundary or edge, it would have neither beginning nor end: it would simply be” (*Brief History of Time*). Robert Jastrow was one of the first to address this issue in his book, *God and the Astronomers* . This agnostic astronomer noted that “three lines of evidence—the motions of the galaxies, the laws of thermodynamics, and the life story of the stars—pointed to one conclusion: all indicated that the Universe had a beginning” (111).

The Second Law of Thermodynamics. The second law of thermodynamics is the law of entropy. It asserts that the amount of *usable* energy in any closed system is decreasing. This must be held in tension with the first law of thermodynamics (*see* THERMODYNAMICS, LAWS OF), the law of the conservation of energy, which states that the amount of *actual* energy existing within the universe changes form, yet remains constant. As energy changes to less usable forms of energy, the closed system of the universe is running down; everything tends toward disorder. Jastrow noted that “Once hydrogen has been burned within that star and converted to heavier elements, it can never be restored to its original state.” Thus, “minute by minute and year by year, as hydrogen is used up in stars, the supply of this element in the universe grows smaller” (“Scientist Caught,” 15–16).

Now if the overall amount of energy stays the same, but the universe is running out of usable energy, then the universe began with a finite supply of energy. This would mean that the universe could not have existed forever in the past. If the universe is getting more and more disordered, it cannot be eternal. Otherwise, it would be totally disordered by now, which it is not. So it must have had a highly ordered beginning.

The Expansion of the Galaxies. The second line of evidence is the expansion of the galaxies. Evidence reveals that the universe is not simply in a holding pattern, maintaining its movement from everlasting to everlasting. It is expanding. It now appears that all of the galaxies are moving outward as if from a central point of origin, and that all things were expanding faster in the past than they are now. As we look out into space, we are also looking back in time, for we are seeing things, not as they are now, but as they were when the light was given off many years ago. The light from a star 7 million light years away tells us what that star was like and its location 7 million years ago. The most complete study made thus far has been carried out on the 200-inch telescope by Allan Sandage. “He compiled information on 42 galaxies, ranging out in space as far as 6 billion light years from us. His measurements indicate that the Universe was expanding more rapidly in the past than it is today. This result lends further support to the belief that the Universe exploded into being” (Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* , 95).

Another astronomer, Victor J. Stenger, used a similar phrase when he stated that “the universe exploded out of nothingness” (Stenger, 13). This explosion, called the *big bang* , was a beginning point from which the entire universe has come. Putting an expanding universe in reverse leads us back to the point where the universe gets smaller and smaller until it vanishes into nothing. By this reckoning the universe, at some point in the distant past, came into being.

The Background Radiation Echo. A third line of evidence that the universe began is the background microwave radiation “echo” that seems to come from the whole universe. It was first thought to be a malfunction or static of the instruments, or even the effect of pigeon droppings. But research has discovered that the static was coming from everywhere—the universe itself has a low-level radiation signature emanating from some past catastrophe like a giant fireball. Jastrow concludes, “No explanation other than the big bang has been found for the fireball radiation. The clincher, which has convinced almost the last doubting Thomas, is that the radiation discovered by Penzias and Wilson has exactly the pattern of wavelengths expected for the light and heat produced in a great explosion. Supporters of the Steady State theory have tried desperately to find an alternative explanation, but they have failed” (Jastrow, “A Scientist Caught,” 15). Again, this evidence leads to the conclusion that there was a beginning of the universe.

The Discovery of a Large Mass of Matter. Since Jastrow wrote of three lines of evidence for the beginning of the universe a fourth has been discovered. According to the predictions of the big bang theory, there should have been a great mass of matter associated with the original explosion of the universe into being, but none was found. Then, by use of the Hubble Space Telescope (1992), astronomers were able to report that “by peering back into the beginning of time, a satellite finds the largest and oldest structure ever observed—evidence of how the universe took shape 15 billion years ago.” In fact, they found the very mass of matter predicted by big bang cosmology. One scientist exclaimed, “It’s like looking at God” (Lemonick, 62).

Objections to the Big Bang. Of course, not all scientists who accept an expanding universe reason that the universe was brought into existence out of nothing by God. Some have sought earnestly to find other alternatives to the theistic implications.

Cosmic Rebound Theory. Some cosmologists argue for some kind of rebound theory whereby the universe collapses and rebounds forever. They propose that there is enough matter to cause a gravitational pull that will draw together the expanding universe. They see it as part of the pulsating nature of reality in a similar way to the Hindu view that the universe moves in eternal cycles.

However, big bang proponents note that there is no evidence to support this view. It is unlikely that there is enough matter in the universe to make the expanding universe collapse even once. Even if there were enough matter to cause a rebound, there is good reason to hold that it would not rebound forever. For according to the well established second law of thermodynamics, each succeeding rebound would have less explosive energy than the previous until eventually the universe would not rebound again. Like a bouncing ball, it would finally peter out, showing that it is not eternal. The rebound hypothesis is based on the fallacious premise that the universe is 100 percent efficient, which it is not. Usable energy is lost in every process.

Logically and mathematically the evidence for the big bang suggests that originally there was no space, no time, and no matter. Hence, even if the universe were somehow going through expansion and contraction from this point on, at the beginning it came into existence from nothing. This would still call for an initial Creator.

Plasma Cosmology. Hannes Alfvén proposed a plasma cosmology, according to which the universe is composed of electrically conducting gases which indirectly produce a repelling effect of galaxy superclusters, causing the observed expansion. However, the expansion does not start from a single point; it has a sort of partial big bang and then contracts to about one-third the size of the present universe. Then some unknown principle kicks in and blows it apart again, thus maintaining an eternal equilibrium. This speculation lacks scientific support. Like other expansion-contraction views, it is contrary to the second law of thermodynamics. It speculates without evidence that the universe never wears out but continually recycles old forms of energy. Nothing is ever used up.

Plasma theorists admit that they do not know any force that could be responsible for the expansion. It is simply speculation built on the presupposition of an eternal universe. Neither can the plasma theory account for the helium and light isotopes in the universe which would not have been synthesized in these quantities in stars alone. These can be explained by the big bang. It provides no good explanation for the microwave background radiation that is readily explained by the big bang view. Heavier matter should be plentiful according to the plasma theory. None has been found.

Finally, the plasma theory provides no explanation for ultimate origins. Plasma popularizer Eric Lerner proposed a “starting place” for the cosmos when it was “filled with a more or less uniform hydrogen plasma, free of electrons and protons” (Heeren, 81). When asked what brought this plasma into being, he admits that “we have no real knowledge of what such processes were” (ibid., 81).

Hawking’s Infinite Time. Another speculative alternative to the big bang is Stephen Hawking’s hypothesis of infinite time, according to which the universe had no beginning. However, this revisiting of Albert Einstein’s view is subject to the same criticisms that led Einstein himself to discard the view (see KALAM COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENT). It is an ingenious theory destroyed by the same brutal gang of facts that demand that the universe had a beginning. Even Hawking distinguishes between his abstract mathematical time, which has no beginning, and real time in which we live and which has a beginning. And even Hawking admitted that if there was a beginning then it is reasonable to assume there was a Creator.

Hawking further admitted that, even if his proposal turned out to describe the real universe, no conclusion could be drawn about the existence of God. He wrote: “I do not believe the no-boundary proposal proves the nonexistence of God, but it may affect our ideas of the nature of God.” In Hawking’s words, it would simply show that “we do not need someone to light the blue torch paper of the universe” (Heeren, 83). This, however, does not mean that there would be nothing for God to do, for there is more to do in running a universe than simply igniting the initial big bang.

Scientists have no theory to show how a universe without boundaries could exist. How, for example, can the ideas of an expanding universe be combined with one or no boundaries? Alan Guth, father of the inflationary model, concluded that Hawking’s proposal “suffers from the problem that it doesn’t yet have a completely well-defined theory in which to embed it. That is, it

really is a notion of quantum gravity, and so far we do not have a complete theory of gravity in which to embed this idea” (Heeren, 83).

Even Einstein failed to find an explanation of his general relativity equation that would not require a beginning or a Beginner for the universe. He later wrote of his desire “to know how God created the universe” (ibid., 84). Indeed, even Hawking raises the question of who put “fire into the equations” and ignited the universe (*Black Holes*, 99).

Spontaneous Eruption: No Need for a Cause. Some atheists argue that there is no need for a cause of the beginning of the universe. They insist that there is nothing incoherent about something spontaneously erupting into existence from nothing. Several points are relevant in response to this objection.

First, this contention is contrary to the established principle of causality (*see* CAUSALITY, PRINCIPLE OF) which affirms that everything that comes to be had a cause. Indeed, even the skeptic David Hume confessed his belief in this time-honored principle, saying, “I never asserted so absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause” (Hume, 1:187).

Second, it is contrary to the scientific enterprise which seeks a causal explanation of things. Francis Bacon, the father of modern science, affirmed that true knowledge is “knowledge by causes” (Bacon, 2.2.121).

Third, it is counterintuitive to believe that things just pop into existence out of nothing, willy-nilly. Reality does not work that way in our experience.

Fourth, the idea that nothing can cause something is logically incoherent, since “nothing” has no power to do anything—it does not even exist. As the Latin axiom put it: *Ex nihilo nihil fit*: From nothing, nothing comes.

Fifth, when one examines the “nothing” from which the universe allegedly came without a supernatural cause, it is discovered that it is not really nothing. Isaac Asimov speaks of it as a state of “existence” in which there is “energy” (Asimov, 148). This is a long way from absolutely nothing. Even in physical terms it is not really nothing. Ed Tryon who originated the idea (in a 1973 *Nature* article) recognized the problem of explaining creation from pure nothingness, since the quantum effects require something more than nothing—they require *space*, something physicists now carefully distinguish from “nothing” (see Heeren, 93). As Fred Hoyle noted, “The physical properties of the vacuum [or “nothing”] would still be needed, and this would be something” (Hoyle, 144). Moreover, general relativity reveals that space in our universe is not mere nothingness. As Einstein wrote: “There is no such thing as an empty space, that is, a space without field. Space-time does not claim existence on its own, but only as a structural quality of the field” (Heeren, 93). Cosmologist Paul Davies points out that when a physicist asks how matter arose from nothing “that means not only, how did matter arise out of nothing, but ‘why did space and time exist in the first place, that matter may emerge from them?’ ” As space scientist John Mather notes, “we have no equations whatever for creating space and time. And the concept doesn’t even make any sense, in English. . . . And I certainly don’t know of any work that seriously would explain it when it can’t even state the concept” (ibid., 93–94). George

Smoot, principal investigator with the COBE satellite, said, “It is possible to envision the creation of the universe from almost nothing—not nothing, but practically nothing” (ibid., 94). So, the “nothing” of which some scientists suggest that the universe could spring without a supernatural cause is not really nothing—it is something. It involves at least space and time. But before the big bang there was no space, no time, and no matter. Out of this “nothing,” only a supernatural cause could bring something.

The First Law of Thermodynamics. Many astronomers who propose that the universe may be eternal, including Carl Sagan, use the first law of thermodynamics to support their view. Often this law of the conservation of energy is stated: “Energy can neither be created nor destroyed.” If this were so, then it would follow that the universe (i.e., the sum total of all actual energy) is eternal.

But this misunderstands the law, which should be stated: “The actual amount of energy in the universe remains constant.” This formulation is based on scientific observation about what does occur and is not a dogmatic philosophical assertion about what *can* or *cannot* happen. There is really no scientific evidence that the universe is eternal.

The second law confirms that the first law cannot be stated in terms that do not allow the creation of energy. For the second law demonstrates that no energy would exist if it did not come from outside a system. Therefore, there can be no such thing as a truly closed system.

To say energy *cannot* be created begs the question. That is what is to be proven. It is victory by stipulative definition—a classic example of the logical fallacy of *petitio principii*.

Eternal Eventless Universe. Some suggest that the big bang only signals the first eruption in a previously eternal universe. That is, the universe was eternally quiet before this first event. The big bang singularity only marks the transition from primal physical stuff. Hence, there is no need for a Creator to make something out of nothing.

Theists observe that no known natural laws could account for this violent eruption out of eternal quietude. Some argue that an eternally quiet universe is physically impossible, since it would have to exist at absolute zero, which is impossible. Matter at the beginning was anything but cold, being collapsed into a fireball with temperatures in excess of billions of degrees Kelvin. In a lump of matter frozen at absolute zero, no first event could occur.

Positing eternal primordial stuff does nothing to account the incredible order that follows the moment of the big bang. Only an intelligent Creator can account for this.

The Steady-State Theory. Hoyle proposed his steady-state theory to avoid the conclusion of a Creator. It affirms that hydrogen atoms are coming into existence to keep the universe from running down. This hypothesis has fatal flaws, not the least of which is that no scientific evidence even hints at such an event. No one has ever observed energy coming into existence anywhere.

The steady-state theory contradicts the principle of causality that there must be an adequate cause for every event. Only a Creator would be an adequate cause for the creation of new hydrogen atoms out of nothing. Denying the principle of causality is a high cost for the scientist to pay.

Although Hoyle has not given up his steady-state theory, he has concluded that the incredible complexity of even the simplest forms of life necessitate a Creator. Having calculated that the chances for first life emerging without intelligent intervention at 1 in 1040,000, Hoyle acknowledges a Creator of life (Hoyle, 24, 147, 150).

Reaction to the Evidence. The combined evidence for a big bang origin of the cosmos provides a strong case for a beginning to the universe. No viable scientific alternatives have been found. But, if the universe has a beginning, then, as Hawking admitted, the evidence would point to existence of a Creator. It follows logically that whatever had a beginning had a Beginner. In the face of this powerful evidence for the beginning of the universe, it is interesting to note how some brilliant scientists reacted to this news.

Astrophysicist Arthur Eddington summed up the attitude of many naturalistic scientists when he wrote: “Philosophically, the notion of a beginning of the present order of Nature is repugnant to me. . . . I should like to find a genuine loophole” (Heeren, 81).

At first Einstein refused to admit that his own general theory of relativity leads to the conclusion that the universe had a beginning. To avoid this conclusion, Einstein added a “fudge factor” in his equations, only to be embarrassed when it became known. To his credit, he eventually admitted his error and concluded that the universe was created. Thus, he wrote of his desire “to know how God created this world.” He said, “I am not interested in this or that phenomenon, in the spectrum of this of that element. I want to know his thought; the rest are details” (cited by Herbert, 177).

One has to ask just why rational beings react in irrational ways to the news the universe had a beginning. Jastrow offers an illuminating clue.

There is a kind of religion in science. It is the religion of a person who believes there is order and harmony in the universe. . . . Every effect must have its cause: There is no first cause. . . . This religious faith of the scientists is violated by the discovery that the world had a beginning under conditions in which the known laws of physics are not valid, and as a product of forces or circumstances we cannot discover. When that happens, *the scientist has lost control*. [Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, 113–14, emphasis added]

Theistic Implications. After reviewing the evidence that the cosmos had a beginning, physicist Edmund Whittaker concluded: “It is simpler to postulate creation ex nihilo—divine will constituting nature from nothingness” (cited in Jastrow, “A Scientist Caught,” 111). Even Jastrow, a confirmed agnostic, said “That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact” (*God and the Astronomers*, 15, 18). Jastrow adds some embarrassing words both for skeptical astronomers and liberal theologians: “Now we see how the astronomical evidence leads to a biblical view of the origin of the world.

The details differ, but the essential elements in the astronomical and biblical accounts of genesis are the same: the chain of events leading to man commence suddenly and sharply at a definite moment in time, in a flash of light and energy” (“A Scientist Caught,” 14). He further observed that “Astronomers now find that they have painted themselves into a corner because they have proven, by their own methods, that the world began abruptly in an act of creation. . . . And they have found that all this happened as a product of forces they cannot hope to discover” (*God and the Astronomers*, 15). Thus, he notes that “the scientists’ pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation.” And “This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but the theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: ‘In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth’ ” (“A Scientist Caught,” 115).

Jastrow ends his book with noteworthy words: “For the scientist who has lived by faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountain of ignorance: He is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries” (*God and the Astronomers*, 116).

Other atheists offer similar clues that the problem with drawing a theistic conclusion from the evidence is not rational but spiritual. Julian Huxley said, “For my own part, the sense of spiritual relief which comes from rejecting the idea of God as a supernatural being is enormous” (Huxley, 32). But if one is purely objective in viewing the evidence, then why experience “spiritually relief” at the news that God does not exist?

Perhaps the famous atheist, Friedrich Nietzsche, said it most clearly: “If one were to prove this God of the Christians to us, we should be even less able to believe in him” (Nietzsche, 627). Obviously, Nietzsche’s problem was not rational but *moral* .

Conclusion. In view of the incredible order in the universe, it is difficult to draw any conclusion other than existence of a supernatural, superintelligent Being behind it all. As one scientist quipped, you can lead a skeptical astronomer to order but you cannot make him think. After writing what he believed were definitive critiques of any attempt to demonstrate God’s existence, even the great philosophical agnostic, Immanuel Kant, wrote: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily we reflect on them: the starry heavens above and the moral law within me” (Kant, 166). Modern astronomers are again faced with the evidence of God for a Creator of the cosmos. It is interesting that this is the very thing to which the apostle Paul points as the reason that all are “without excuse” (Rom. 1:19–20).

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Bruce, F. F. Frederick Fyvie Bruce (1910–1990) was born in Elgin, Scotland and trained in the classics at Elgin Academy, the University of Aberdeen, and Cambridge University. Though he is best known for his work in biblical studies, he never took formal courses in either Bible or theology. He was awarded an honorary doctor of divinity degree from Aberdeen. He taught Greek at Edinburgh (1934–35) and Leeds (1938–47). From 1959 to 1978 he was John Rylands

Professor of Biblical Criticism and exegesis at Manchester University. Concurrently (1956–78) he was a contributing editor for *Christianity Today Magazine*.

Bruce wrote nearly fifty books and about two thousand articles, essays, and reviews. He is best known for *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (see NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS, RELIABILITY OF). His *Commentary on the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians* is a standard. His most explicitly apologetic work is *The Defense of the Gospel* (1959). *The Books and the Parchments* (1963) supports the authenticity and reliability of the Bible, as does *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* (1974). He was also known for his work on Qumran, *Second Thoughts on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1956).

Views and Teaching. *Scripture and Apologetics.* Bruce’s conclusions on the Bible did not make him a strong defender of Scripture, though he generally fell within a conservative viewpoint. He did not consider himself a conservative, nor did he believe in the “inerrancy” of the Bible, though he looked on Scripture as “truth” (Gasque, 24). “If any of my critical conclusions, for example, are conservative, they are so not because they are conservative, nor because I am conservative, but because I believe them to be the conclusions to which the evidence points” (Gasque, 24). Bruce’s chief importance for apologetics was as a defender of the reliability of the biblical manuscripts.

Bruce was not a Christian apologist as such, but his works support historical apologetics (see APOLOGETICS, HISTORICAL). In *Defense of the Gospel* is an exposition of the apologetics practiced by the apostles in the New Testament against Judaism, paganism, and early gnosticism . Bruce insists that “Christian apologetics is a needed part of Christian witness” (*In Defense* , 10; see also APOLOGETICS, NEED FOR).

Resurrection. Bruce believed in the historicity of the resurrection accounts and in the bodily resurrection itself. He distinguished the Christian view of bodily resurrection from the Greek view of the immortality of the soul (“Paul on Immortality,” 464–65). He critiques the gnostic view of a spiritual resurrection, insisting that for Paul, “This future resurrection could only be a bodily resurrection” (ibid., 466). However, his view that believers receive their spiritual resurrection body at death has helped undermine the historic evangelical view of a physical resurrection body (see RESURRECTION, PHYSICAL NATURE OF). Of 2 Corinthians 5:1–10 he said, “Here Paul seems to imply that for those who do not survive until the *parousia* [coming], the new body will be immediately available at death” (ibid., 470–71). This led many of his students, including Murray Harris, to affirm the unorthodox view that the believer’s resurrection body will come from heaven, not the grave. Harris later retracted this view under criticism (see Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection* , chaps. 6, 11).

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Buber, Martin. Jewish existentialist Martin Buber (1878–1965) was born in Vienna, Austria and studied philosophy and art at the universities of Vienna, Zurich, and Berlin. An active Zionist as a young man, he was instrumental in the revival of Hasidism, a form of Jewish mysticism. His famous “I-Thou” philosophy was developed in 1923, though William James had used the phrase in 1897. Buber taught at the University of Frankfurt from 1923 to 1933 and fled Germany in 1938. He taught at Hebrew University from 1938 to 1951. His form of existentialism was a significant influence on neoorthodox theologian Emil *Brunner.

Buber’s major works include *Good and Evil* (tr. 1953), *I And Thou* (1923; tr. 1957), *The Eclipse of God* (tr. 1952), *The Prophetic Faith* (1949; tr. 1960), and *Two Types of Faith* (that is, Jewish and Christian; 1951; Eng. 1961).

The Philosophy of Buber. *I-Thou vs. I-It.* An I-Thou relation is where others are treated as an end, rather than as a means. People should be loved and things used, not the reverse. People are the subject, not the object. But many things can hinder I-Thou relations—seeming rather than being; speechifying rather than real dialogue; imposing oneself on, rather than unfolding oneself to another.

Since Buber believed in God, and Jean-Paul Sartre did not, their existential views form an instructive contrast:

Jean-Paul Sartre	Martin Buber
Common Project	I-Thou
Others are hell.	Others are heaven.
Others are the means of objectifying myself.	Others help me discover my true subjectivity in interpersonal relations.
There is no ultimate meaning, since humanity cannot become God.	There is ultimate meaning, since there is an ultimate personal ground of personal relationships.

God. According to Buber, God is “wholly other,” but also “wholly the same,” nearer to me than I am to myself (*see* GOD, NATURE OF). God is so close he cannot be sought, since there is nowhere he is not to be found. In fact, God is not sought by the human being; the human meets God through grace as God moves to the person. All who hallow this life meet the living God as the unfathomable condition of being. To see everything in God is not to renounce the world but to establish it on its true basis. We can sense God’s presence, but can never solve his mysteriousness. God is experienced in and through the world and others, but must be met alone. In union with God, we are not absorbed, but remain an individual “I.” By this ontological difference, Buber avoids absolute pantheism.

Religious Language. Like Plotinus, Buber held that God is not the Good but the Supergood; he must be loved in his concealment. God does not name himself (in the “I Am That I Am”), but reveals himself. This is a disclosure, not a definition. The idea of God is a masterpiece of human construction, an image of the Imageless. Nonetheless, the word *God* should not be given up, simply because it is the most heavily laden of all human words, and thereby the most imperishable and indispensable of words. The word *religion*, however, is vexatious and has undergone the epidemic sickening of our time. It should be replaced by the phrase *all real human dealings with God*.

The Eclipse of God. Philosophy hinders the human relation to God. The person makes selfhood supreme and thus shuts off light from heaven. The passion peculiar to philosophers is pride in which their system replaces God. Further, objective “It” language is verbal idolatry that obscures God. God does not come under the law of contradiction; we speak of him only dialectically.

Evaluation. Among positive features to Buber’s thought are its stress on the need for personal relationships and for a basis in God. Buber makes a valuable critique of the way philosophy has often eclipsed God and helpful suggestions about overcoming artificial relationships.

The view, however, is subject to many of the criticisms of other forms of religious existentialism (*see* BARTH, KARL ; KIERKEGAARD, SØREN). From an evangelical Christian perspective a few are particularly worthy of note.

Denial of Propositional Revelation. Buber’s denial of propositional revelation (*see* REVELATION, SPECIAL) had a marked influence on Brunner and neoorthodoxy (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR). He denies that God has revealed himself in any propositional statements. This is a strange thing to say about a theistic God. This god can act but not talk; he is not dead, but he is dumb. Therefore the creatures can do what the Creator cannot. The effect is greater than the Cause.

Equivocal God-Talk. Not only is God tongue-tied, but when he does reveal himself the language conveys to us nothing about God himself. It is equivocal, totally different from the way God is. The effect is not similar to the Cause. God gives what he does not have. There is no analogy between Creator and creatures (*see* ANALOGY, PRINCIPLE OF).

A Mystical Epistemology. Buber is subject to the same criticisms as other mystics. How does one know it is God who is being encountered in this mystical experience, rather than Satan. A totally subjective experience has no objective criteria by which it can be evaluated. The Christian mystical experience is indistinguishable from the Buddhist mystical experience (*see* BUDDHISM). There are no meaningful criteria by which to know truth.

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Buddhism. *See* ZEN BUDDHISM ; PANTHEISM .

Bultmann, Rudolph. *See* MIRACLES, MYTH AND .

Butler, Joseph. Joseph Butler (1692–1753) was an important eighteenth-century English apologist (*see* APOLOGETICS, NEED FOR). Though he came from a Presbyterian family, Butler was ordained in the Church of England in 1718, after attending Oxford University. He eventually became bishop of Durham.

Although Butler made a significant contribution to the discussion of morality in “Three Sermons on Human Nature,” he is best known for *Analogy of Religion* (1736), in which he defends Christianity against Deism , particularly that of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, and Matthew Tindal. Lord Shaftesbury wrote *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times* (1711) and Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730).

Butler’s Apologetic. Butler was influenced by his older contemporary, Samuel Clarke , a disciple of Sir Isaac Newton and defender of the Christian Faith. *Analogy of Religion* was a defense of the plausibility of Christianity in terms of the analogy between revealed and natural religion (*see* REVELATION, GENERAL).

The Use of Probability. In accord with the empirical basis of knowledge and the limitations of science, Butler argued, our knowledge of nature is only probable (*see* CERTAINTY/CERTITUDE ; INDUCTIVISM). Since this is the case, “one is always in the position of a potential learner, and so never can posit what one knows of nature as *the standard* to judge what is natural” (Rurak,

367). Probability, which is the guide to life, supports the belief in a supernatural revelation from God in the Bible (*see* BIBLE, EVIDENCE FOR) and the miracles of Christ.

Butler began *Analogy* by noting that “It is come, I knew not how, to be taken for granted by many persons, that Christianity is not much a subject of inquiry, but that it is, now at length, discovered to be fictitious.” His response is to the point that “any reasonable man who would thoroughly consider the matter, may be as much assured, as he is of his own being, that it is not however, so clear a case that there is nothing in it. There is, I think, strong evidence of its truth” (*Analogy in Religion*, 2).

Objection to Deism. Butler directed his attack against the deist Tindal who argued that “There’s a religion of nature and reason written in the hearts of everyone of us from the first creation by which mankind must judge the truth of any instituted religion whatever” (Tindal, 50).

To deists who reject Scripture as a supernatural revelation because of its difficulties, Butler responds: “He who believes the Scriptures to have proceeded from him who is the Author of nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it, as are found in the constitution of nature” (*see* REVELATION, GENERAL). Hence, “he who denies Scripture to have been from God, upon account of these difficulties, may for the very same reason, deny the world to have been formed by him” (*Analogy in Religion*, 9–10). Since the deists admitted the latter they should not deny the former. As James Rurak notes, “both natural and revealed religion will be assessed by the same standard, the constitution and course of nature. Natural religion cannot be used as a standard to judge revelation” (Rurak, 367). There is an analogy between them.

Judging Christianity as a Whole. Another result of Butler’s analogous argument is that a system of religion must be judged as a whole, not simply from attacks leveled against specific parts, as the Deists were prone to do. When this standard was applied to Christianity, Butler believed that revealed that there is an “Intelligent Author and Governor of nature.” He extended this analogy to belief that:

Mankind is appointed to live in a future state; that everyone shall be rewarded or punished; . . . that this world being in the state of apostasy and wickedness . . . gave an occasion for an additional dispensation of Providence; of the utmost importance; proved by miracles; . . . carried on by a divine person, the Messiah, in order to the recovery of the world; yet not revealed to all men, nor proved with the strongest possible evidence to all those to whom it is revealed; but only to such a part of mankind, and with such particular evidence as the wisdom of God thought fit. [*Analogy in Religion*, 16–17]

Natural and Supernatural Revelation. With the deists Butler agrees that God is the Author of nature and that Christianity contains a republication of this original revelation in creation. However, Christianity is more than a supernatural revelation. Butler explains: “the essence of natural religion may be said to consist in the religious regards to ‘God the Father Almighty’: and the essence of revealed religion, as distinguished from natural, to consist in religious regard to ‘the Son,’ and to ‘the Holy Ghost.’ ” And “How these revelations are made known, whether by reason or revelation, makes no alteration of the case; because the duties arise out of the relations

themselves, not out of the manner in which we are informed of them” (*Analogy in Religion*, 198).

The Defense of Miracles. Butler devoted a chapter to the subject “Of the supposed Presumption against a Revelation, considered as miraculous.” In his own summary of the argument (in the margin) he insists that there is

I. No presumption, from analogy, against the general Christian Scheme; for (1) although undiscoverable by reason or experience, we only know a small part of a vast whole; (2) even if it be unlike the known course of nature, (a) the unknown may not *everywhere* resemble the known; (b) we observe unlikeness sometimes in nature; (c) the alleged unlikeness is not complete. Thus no presumption lies against the general Christian scheme, whether we call it miraculous or not.

II. No presumption against a primitive revelation, for (i) *miracle* is relative to a *course* of nature. (ii) Revelation may well have followed Creation, which is an admitted fact. (iii) The further miracle [is] no additional difficulty.” For “(iv) Tradition declares that Religion was revealed at the first.”

III. No presumption from analogy against miracles in historic times, for (a) we have no parallel case of a second fallen world; (b) in particular, (i) there is a presumption against all alleged facts before testimony, not after testimony. (ii) Reasons for miraculous intervention may have arisen in 5000 years. (iii) Man’s need of supernatural guidance is such a reason. (iv) Miracles [are] comparable to *extraordinary* events, against which some presumption always lies. Thus (a) Miracles [are] not incredible. In fact, (b) In some cases, [they are] *a priori* probable. (c) In no case is there a peculiar presumption against them. [*Analogy in Religion*, 155–61]

Upon all this I conclude; that there certainly is no such presumption against miracles, as to render them in any way incredible; that on the contrary, our being able to discern reasons for them, gives a positive credibility to the history of them, in cases where those reasons hold; and that is by no means certain, that there is any peculiar presumption at all, from analogy, even in the lowest degree, against miracles, as distinguished from other extraordinary [natural] phenomena.

Therefore, by analogy with nature, miracles are both credible and even *a priori* probable (*see* MIRACLE).

Evaluation. *On the Positive Side.* Given his deist context, Butler made a significant defense of Christianity. Arguing from their premise of natural revelation, he showed that there was no probable presumption against Christianity. Further, by reducing the epistemological basis to probability he commendably avoided rational necessity for his conclusions. Regardless of how one evaluates his results, he should be commended for his rational attempt to defend Christianity against the attacks of its naturalistic critics.

On the Negative Side. From the standpoint of a classical apologist (*see* CLASSICAL, APOLOGETICS), Butler unnecessarily weakened the cosmological argument by arguing from analogy.

Some naturalists argue that Butler’s argument for miracles is based on a false analogy: “The presumption against miracles is not merely a presumption against a specific event, but against that *kind* of event taking place.” Further, the comparison with extraordinary events in nature is not valid. “For in the case of these forces, given the same physical antecedents, the same consequents will always follow; and the truth of this can be verified by experiment” (Bernard, 161–62).

While this critique appears valid for some of the illustrations that Butler provides (e.g., electricity and magnetism), it does not appear to work with all singularities in nature. In particular, it would not apply to the big bang theory held by many naturalistic scientists, since the antecedent conditions were nothing or nonbeing. From these, no prediction can be made nor verified by further experiment. Further, Butler appears to be correct in the negative side of his argument that there is no *a priori* probability against miracles. Indeed, he builds a strong case for *a priori* probability (*see* MIRACLES, ARGUMENTS AGAINST).

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