

THE BIBLE
(A CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC)
(Jay Smith)

INTRODUCTION: IS THE BIBLE TRUSTWORTHY?

[I] REVELATION

- [A] Muslims: Three kinds of revelation
- [B] Christians: four forms of revelation
- [C] Definition of Revelation

[II] INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

- [A] The Biblical authority for inspiration
- [B] The Extent of Inspiration

[III] A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLE

- [A] The Canon
- [B] The Historical Reliability of the Bible
 - (1) Manuscripts
 - (2) Dating
 - (3) Eyewitness accounts
 - (4) Hostile Accounts
 - (5) Versions or translations
 - (6) Lectionaries
 - (7) Early Church Fathers
- [C] ARCHAEOLOGY
 - (1) What the Archaeologists say
 - (2) Old Testament Examples
 - (3) New Testament Examples

[IV] EVIDENCES FOR THE BIBLE'S AUTHORITY

- [A] Its Fulfilled Prophecies
- [B] Its extraordinary Unity and Harmony
- [C] Its amazing Circulation
- [D] Its Appeal to all Classes everywhere
- [E] Its Wisdom and high Moral Teaching
- [F] Its life-changing power

[V] ANSWERING THE CRITICS

- [A] Common Misconceptions
 - (1) The New Testament is a newer or changed version of the Old Testament
 - (2) The New Testament abrogates the Old Testament?
 - (3) The Bible has been corrupted by Jews and Christians
 - (4) The Jesus Seminar proves the Bible's corruption
 - (5) The Gospel of Barnabas is the real gospel
- [B] Answers to Specific Muslim Accusations
 - (1) Multiple Versions of the Bible
 - (2) The Apocrypha
 - (3) Variant Readings
 - (4) 50,000 Errors
 - (5) Biblical Contradiction (or Numerical Errors)
 - (6) The Question of Authorship
 - (7) Parallel Passages in the Bible
 - (8) Pornography in the Bible
 - (9) The Problem with Bad Language

CONCLUSION: THE BIBLE IS TRUSTWORTHY (so use it, don't abuse it!)

INTRODUCTION

Whenever a Christian and Muslim find themselves in dialogue, it soon becomes quite apparent that there are irreconcilable differences between that which they believe. Muslims contend Jesus was only a prophet, while Christians believe He was the Son of God; Muslims maintain there is no need for atonement, while Christians believe without it we are still lost for eternity, and so on... The Christian asks the Muslim why he or she says the things they do, and they respond that they repeat only what they have learned from the Qur'an. In reply the Christian claims that what they believe also comes from the Word of God, the Bible. It doesn't take long before both sides realize that neither party can agree with the other because the authority for what each believes and says is at a variance one with the other. The Bible contradicts much of what the Qur'an says, and this fact alone will continue to negate many worthwhile conversations which they may wish to indulge in.

So, what is the solution? If two documents which claim to hold propositional truth are in contradiction with each other, it is imperative to ascertain whether the contradictions can be explained adequately. And if not, then the natural conclusion is that one or both of the documents are false. From there the question must be forwarded concerning whether either of the scriptures can stand up to verification; in other words whether they can withstand an external critical analysis of their authenticity.

This is an enormously intricate and difficult subject. Both Islam and Christianity maintain that they receive their beliefs from 'divinely inspired' truth. Consequently, to suspect the source for this truth, the scriptures for each faith, is to put the integrity of both Christianity and Islam on trial. This is obviously a task that should not be taken lightly, and I do not intend to do so here.

Consequently, I have decided not to attempt a simplistic analysis concerning the authority of the Qur'an and the Bible in one single paper. Instead I have tackled the authority of the Qur'an in two previous papers (entitled The Qur'an, a Christian Apologetic, and Is the Qur'an the Word of God?), with a follow-up paper analysing the historical evidence for both scriptures (entitled The Bible and the Qur'an, an Historical Comparison). With this paper I will now turn my attention to the authority for our own scriptures, **the Bible**, applying much the same criteria used in the previous three.

I will admit from the outset that as a Christian I do have a bias towards the authenticity for the Biblical account. This bias is evidenced in this paper, particularly in the latter sections where I try to answer the criticisms levelled against our scriptures. I simply ask the reader to accept my presuppositional base and take the arguments I posit at face value. I trust the defences I give will speak for themselves, so that you as the reader will come away with the conclusion that indeed the Bible stands resolute as the true and final Word of God.

In no way do I claim to know all the answers, nor will I be so pretentious as to assume that I can exhaustively argue the question of authority for both the Qur'an and the Bible in these few papers. The studies are nothing more than mere "overviews," with the hope that they will stimulate the readers to continue studying these very important areas in their own time. The hope is that, like Peter before us, we too can "**always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks [us] to give the reason for the hope that [we] have**" (1 Peter 3:15).

In the previous studies we asked whether the Qur'an could claim to be the final word of God, and we concluded that it lacked authority in a number of key areas. We looked at the Muslim concept of revelation and inspiration, noting how it differed from that of our own, and decided that this difference could be blamed for much of the misunderstandings which exist between our two faiths. We also noted that the Qur'an had linguistic deficiencies, which put doubt to its claim of being a truly perfect and distinctive divine document.

Concerning its claim as a **universal** document (sura 34:28), we came to the conclusion that in reality the material it contains reflects more a 7th-9th century **Arabic** mind-set (suras 14:4; 42:7; 43:3), and merely follows the life and needs of one man, **Muhammad** (suras 33:21, 36-38, 50-51; 66:1). We then asked how the Qur'an came to us, pointing out the various problems with its **collation**. Turning our

attention to a more polemical slant we noted that though the Qur'an claims to be **perfect** (suras 2:23; 10:37-38; 17:88), there were many **contradictions** (suras 4:157 vs. 19:33; 7:54 vs. 41:9-12; 17:101 vs. 7:133; 79:40-41 vs. 4:24-25, 55:46-78; etc...) and **errors** which were quite easily identifiable within the text (suras 5:116; 7:124; 19:7; 20:85-97; 31:1037:6-10; 65:12, etc...). We then concluded our study by asking, why, if it is the **eternal** word of God (sura 85:22), so many of its stories have parallels with late second - fourth century (AD) **Jewish Talmudic** accounts, which even the Jewish community considered to be quite heretical (i.e. Cain in Abel's story in sura 5:31-32 = Targum of Jonathan-ben Uzziah and Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5; Abraham's story in sura 21:51-71 = The Midrash Rabbah; and Solomon and Sheba's story in sura 27:17-44 = II Targum of Esther, etc...)?

When we added up all these problems we were left with only one conclusion: that the Qur'an, rather than convincing us with its claim as the final word of God, comes across as no more than another man-made religious document, which can possibly give us an insight into the culture and world-view of the 7th-9th century Middle East, but nothing more (Crone 1980:7).

On the other hand we have as an alternative the Jewish and Christian scriptures in our possession which we can turn to as a source of God's revelation to humanity. In order to have parity in our study it is important that we, likewise, scrutinize the Bible with a similar standard for authenticity that we levied on the Qur'an. Thus, we must apply the same critical analysis to the Bible and ask whether it can stand up to the same scrutiny. Because only then will we feel confident that it alone can make the claim to be the true and final word of God.

In order to begin the discussion, I would like to ask two questions; the first, what we mean by revelation, and the second, how we can claim that the Bible is the uniquely inspired Word of God?

II REVELATION:

One of the difficulties we have with Muslims (as we discussed in the paper on the Qur'an) is in defining what we mean by revelation. Muslims assume that our definition of revelation is parallel to theirs. Yet, we now know that this just isn't so; and it is here where I feel much of the confusion lies.

[A] Three kinds of revelation:

There are certain Muslims who, while using the Qur'an as the definitive model of revelation, claim that the New Testament cannot be considered as authoritative as it contains three sets of progressively inferior revelations: namely 1) that which is the Word of **God** (passages where God speaks), 2) that which is the words of a **Prophet** of God (passages where Jesus speaks), and 3) that which is the words of an **historian** (passages where things are said about Jesus). They maintain that Islam, unlike Christianity, has separated these categories into three different genre: The **Qur'an** which has only the Words of God, the **Hadith**, which contain the words of the prophet, and other **books** (the *Tafsir* and *Tahriq*) which are a "compilation of writings" by historians.

Christians do not deny that in the Bible we find combined these three styles of revelation. Yet we would point out to those Muslims who have a problem with this that in the Qur'an examples of these same three forms of revelation can likewise be found. For instance, the Qur'an contains many passages which record the words of the prophets of Allah. Take for example Sura 3:40, where the prophet Zakariya questions how he can have a son. Could Allah be speaking these words? Another example can be found in Sura 19:64 where we clearly find the words of angels speaking directly to Muhammad about Allah.

Furthermore, in the Hadith we find many words which are not those of the prophet, but of Allah himself. These sayings are referred to as *Hadith Qudsi*, which when translated means divine sayings. An example can be found in Sahih Muslim, vol.4, pg.1476.

The Qur'an, as well, has passages which read as if they came from an historian. The passage which relates to the birth of Jesus from his mother Mary falls into this category (Sura 19:22-23). This is no different in narrative form to what Mark 11:13 says of Jesus. Ironically, it is this very verse in Mark which Ahmed Deedat (the well-known Muslim apologist) uses as an example of a historical narrative, though he claims the same is not found in the Qur'an.

Thus, the claim by Muslims that the words of Allah, of prophets and historians are kept jealously apart in their revelations is simply not true. Like the New Testament, the Qur'an has words of prophets and historical narratives throughout its pages. Furthermore the less authoritative Hadith also contain alleged sayings of Allah as well as those of prophets.

What then is the point of this argument? Why are Muslims so keen on claiming that the New Testament is somehow deficient because it includes both the words of prophets and those of historians? The primary reason possibly has to do with a confusion over what both Muslims and Christians delineate by divine revelation.

[B] Definition of Revelation:

Muslims believe that the book, the Qur'an, is Allah's ultimate revelation to humanity because it came down directly, word for word, to Muhammad via the angel *Jibril* (this process is referred to in Arabic as *nazil*, sura 17:85).

Christians, meanwhile believe that while God used prophets to reveal information about Himself, ultimately God cannot reveal Himself truly in words alone. True self-revelation had to come about by an "uncovering" of Himself. This happened when God intersected time and space and came to earth in the body of a human (Hebrews 10:5), as Jesus Christ. Thus Jesus could say in John 14:9, "He that has seen me has seen the Father." He, therefore, is the ultimate revelation from God, as Jesus was God Himself, in the flesh.

The entire Old Testament moves progressively towards this culmination of revelation, when God came Himself and revealed Himself truly. Yet, what we now know about that event 2,000 years ago we do not find in a book written by Christ himself. Instead we find His life and teachings written in the pages of the New Testament, which the Muslims believe to be invalid. Yet Christians believe that this is the inspired revelation from God which has come to us, much as all previous revelations of God have come,

via individuals chosen by God for that task. Here, then, is where many of the problems concerning revelation between Muslims and Christians lie.

Christians believe that the entire Bible shows the imprint of human hands. Evidence of this can be found in the variety of human languages used, the varying styles of writing, the differences in the author's intellects and temperaments, as well as the apparent allusions to the author's contemporary concepts of scientific knowledge, without which the scriptures would not have been understood by the people of that time.

This Christian criteria for revelation, however, is not acceptable to Muslims, as it is in seeming conflict with their own. Yet, by simply measuring the Bible against the *nazil* concept which they claim for their Qur'an, Muslims condemn themselves of duplicity, since they demand of the New Testament that which they do not demand of the previous revelations, the *Taurat* and *Zabuur*, though both are revered as equally inspired revelations by all Muslims. Muslims believe that Moses wrote the *Taurat* and David the *Zabuur*. However, neither claimed to have received their revelations by a means of a *nazil* transmission. So why insist on such for the New Testament, especially since the document makes no such claim itself?

The underlying reason perhaps lies in the belief by Muslims that the Qur'an, because it is the only revelation which came "unfettered" by human intervention, is thus the truest and clearest statement of Allah's word, and therefore supersedes all previous revelations, even annulling those revelations, as they have supposedly been corrupted by the limitations of their human authors.

Left unsaid is the glaring irony that the claim for a *nazil* revelation for the Qur'an comes from one source alone, the man to which it was supposedly revealed, Muhammad. There are no external witnesses both before or at the time who can corroborate Muhammad's testimony. Not even miracles are provided to substantiate his claims.

In fact, the evidences for the authority of God's revelation which the Bible emphatically demands are completely absent in the Qur'an; namely, that the prophet of God must speak in the Name of God, *Yahweh* (Exodus 3:1-6,13-15; Psalms 72:17-19; and Revelation 1:8,17); that his message must conform to revelation which has gone before (Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Isaiah 8:20; Matthew 5:17-18; 24:35; and Revelation 22:18-20); that he must make predictions which are verifiable (Deuteronomy 18:21-22; Isaiah 43:9; and John 13:18-21), and that his revelation must be accompanied by signs and wonders in order to give him authority as having come from God. Because these are missing in the case of the prophet Muhammad and of the Qur'an, it seems indeed that **the Qur'an, and not the Biblical scriptures turn out to be the most human of documents.**

Muslims must understand that Christians have always maintained that the Word of God was indeed written by men, but that these men were always under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Whereas the Qur'an is alleged to be free of any human element, God in the Bible deliberately chose to reveal His Word through individuals who were inspired prophets and apostles, so that His Word would not only be conveyed to humanity but would be communicated to their understanding and powers of comprehension as well. This the Qur'an cannot do if it has no human element, as is generally alleged.

III] INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE:

We now come to the other difficulty for Muslims concerning the authority of our scriptures, the problem of inspiration. If our scriptures did not come directly word-for-word from God (*nazil*), then how, they ask, do we know whether what we have in our possession today is that which God had intended?

The initial answer is that the Bible itself claims its own inspiration.

[A] The Biblical authority for inspiration:

In 2 Timothy 3:16, we are told that all Scripture is inspired. The word used for inspiration is *theopneustos* which means "God-breathed," inferring that what was written had its origin in God Himself. In 2 Peter 1:21 we read that the writers were "moved" by God. Thus, God used each writer, including his personality to accomplish a divinely authoritative work, for God cannot inspire error. The writers received the actual recording of truth.

The Bible speaks many times of its inspiration: In Luke 24:27,44; John 5:39; and Hebrews 10:7, Jesus says that what was written in the entire Old Testament spoke of Him, and would come to pass.

Romans 3:2 and Hebrews 5:12 refer to the Old Testament as the Word of God. We read in 1 Corinthians 2:13, "It is the emphatic testimony of Paul that he spoke in 'words'...taught by the Spirit." This is corroborated in 2 Timothy 3:16, as we saw above. In 1 Thessalonians 2:13 it reads, "...you accepted it not as the word of men but for what it really is, the Word of God." Again in 2 Peter 1:21 Peter writes, "For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along [moved] by the Holy Spirit." And then finally in Revelation 22:18,19 the writer John states, "...if anyone adds to them [the scriptures], God shall add to him the plagues...and if anyone takes away from the words of the book...God shall take away his part from the tree of life..."

Charles Wesley summarizes this high view of inspiration brilliantly when he says, "The Bible must be the invention either of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God. However, it was not written by good men, because good men would not tell lies by saying 'Thus saith the Lord;' it was not written by bad men because they would not write about doing good duty, while condemning sin, and themselves to hell; thus, it must be written by divine inspiration" (McDowell 1990:178).

Muslims would point out that we had fallen into the same trap for which we condemn them. To say that the Bible gives itself authority for inspiration is similar to Arabs who claim the Arab language as God's unique language, or the claim of Muhammad for the Qur'an's authority, which then gives him his authority as a prophet. It's all too convenient, cyclical and somewhat subjective. The argument, according to Muslims, goes something like this: "Christians claim that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and as proof of this contention, they quote a passage from the Bible that says it is" (i.e. II Timothy 3:16). Yet, nothing is proved here, as this is mere "Circular Reasoning," since the sole authority for the Bible comes from the document itself. Ironically, it is this very argument which Christians have used with Muslims when pointing to the source for their Qur'anic authority, such that both Muhammad and the Qur'an require each other for their authority; the one supporting the other.

Obviously, if that was the sole criteria we use to corroborate the authority for our scriptures, then such an accusation would be correct, for neither a document (nor a prophet for that matter) may claim authority by virtue of their own testimony. In order to maintain the assertion of authenticity a scripture must demonstrate that it is basically a reliable and trustworthy **historical** document. To verify it as such, we must use the test of historical criticism in order to ascertain whether the scripture is a valid historical record. We must apply to the Bible that which we earlier applied to the Qur'an.

Before we do that, however, it may be helpful to define what we mean by inspiration.

IBI The Extent of Inspiration:

How does God inspire the writers? Does He simply move the writers by challenging their heart to reach new heights, much like we find in the works of Shakespeare, Milton, Homer and Dickens, all of which are human literary masterpieces? Or does that which He inspire contain the words of God-along with myths, mistakes and legends, thus creating a book in which portions of the Word of God can be found, along with those of finite and fallible men? Or are the scriptures the infallible Word of God in their entirety? In other words, how, Muslims will ask, is this inspiration carried out? Does God use mechanical dictation, or does He use the writers own minds and experiences? The simple answer is that God's control is always with them in their writings, such that the Bible is nothing more than "**The Word of God in the words of men**" (McDowell 1990:176).

This then leads on to the follow-up question concerning how much of the scripture is inspired? Is every book, every word, every historical matter, or scientific statement inspired?

There are those who believe in the idea of **Plenary inspiration**. Plenary denotes the full and complete inspiration, extending to all parts. They would maintain that not only are the original documents inspired, but the manuscripts and translations are inspired as well.

Other Christians would not go that far, but say "...co-authorship implies that the Spirit's superintendence does not extend to the choice of the words by the human authors (verbal inspiration, not dictation) but preserves its product from everything inconsistent with a divine authorship" (McDowell 1990:176). In other words, the Holy Spirit ensured that everything which was essential was included.

While neither position is contradictory, what is important to remember is that with today's great number of New Testament manuscripts available for scrutiny (approximately 24,000), the science of textual criticism renders us an adequate representation. Therefore, when we read the Bible we can be assured that what we are reading is the inspired Word of God.

Yet, how can we be sure that the scriptures in our hands today are identical with that which were revealed by the Holy Spirit so many centuries ago? Can we verify their authenticity so that they can be

trusted as the inspired and revealed Word of God in the words of men? In order to answer that question adequately, it is important to apply a similar historical analysis to the Bible as was applied earlier with the Qur'an. Only then will we know the answer to the question above.

III] A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLE

In order to maintain the assertion of authenticity a scripture which comes from God must demonstrate not only its impact on those to whom it was written, but it must also prove that it is a reliable and trustworthy **historical** document for those of us who read it today. To verify its claims, there are a number of tests which can be applied to ascertain whether the scripture is a valid historical record. A test applied to one scripture must likewise be applied to the other. Therefore, the tests applied to the Qur'an must be also applied to the Bible; namely, questioning its sources as well as its makeup, and asking whether there were any external criteria which could corroborate that which the Bible maintains.

The first question Muslim critics always pose regarding the historical authority for the Bible concerns how the canon was devised; in other words, how we came to have the books which make up the Bible currently in our possession.

A] The Canon

Muslims contend that the canon of the New Testament (in particular) was not formed until quite late, in fact not until the Council of Nicea, in 325 AD. It was only at this time, they say, that the Bible as we know it was finally put together, and this explains why much of its content does not reflect that which we find in the later revelation to Muhammad, the Qur'an.

Unfortunately, many Muslims have not read church history. For if they had they would have found that it was not any council or even the church in the fourth century which created the canon. The canon was already well known by that time. The church in the fourth century simply **recognized** and authorized the books that had always been considered to be inspired from their very inception. Five rules were used by the church to determine canonicity, including:

- 1) was it authoritative: did it come from God? Did it have the seal of apostolic authority?
- 2) was it prophetic: was it written by a man of God?
- 3) was it authentic: the rule-of-thumb was "if in doubt, throw it out."
- 4) was it dynamic: did it change lives?
- 5) was it used: was it read and collected by early Christians (II Peter 3:16)?

As for the Old Testament Canon; it had already been drawn up in 90 AD by the Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai of the school of *Hillel*, at *Jamnia*, due to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Muslims often point to another set of writings which they contend should also be included in the canon, since they are included in some Bibles and not in others. These writings are none other than those of the *Apocrypha*.

The *Apocrypha*, however, were never included in the early canon, neither by the early church fathers nor by those who drew up the canon at Nicea. They were a set of books which were added to the Old Testament by the Roman Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in 1546 AD, and only then as a polemical ploy against the Reformation movement (McDowell 1972:33-36). Previous to that time they had been excluded from the canon for a number of reasons:

- 1) they had historical and geographical inaccuracies,
- 2) they included false doctrines, as well as subject matter which was artificial, and
- 3) they presented no prophetic power nor any poetic religious feeling (McDowell 1990:40).

We must remember that the Jews had never considered them authentic. Jesus never quoted from them, and the scholars at *Jamnia* did not recognize them. In fact, no Christian council for the first four centuries accepted them. If the Muslims would read the early church father's letters they would realise that they consistently spoke out against them. Even the Roman Catholic scholars upto the Reformation rejected them.

Why then was the New Testament Canon introduced so late? The reason was that there simply was no need for a canon earlier. Every church was aware which books were authoritative and which were not. In fact the need for drawing up a canon only came about in the fourth century because of a heretic named *Marcion* who had devised his own canon in 140 AD, as well as the use of spurious books by the Eastern churches at that time, and the Edict of Diocletian in 303 AD which declared that all Christian

sacred books were to be destroyed (McDowell 1972:37).

The primary test for canonicity was apostolic authority, or apostolic approval. The earliest list was drawn up by Athanasius in 367 AD. The list of 27 books was then approved at the Synod of Hippo in 393 AD. Yet, all they did was to record the previously established canonicity of these 27 books, and nothing more (McDowell 1972:36-38; 1990:37-38).

IB| The Historical Reliability of the Bible

While we may disagree with Muslims on certain aspects of canonicity, a much more important test for the Bible's credibility concerns a critical analysis of its historical viability. In other words, can the Bible be placed in history? Are there manuscripts or documents, or even archaeological findings which place it in a particular time and place and therefore corroborate that which we read in its pages? These are the same questions which we posed to the Qur'an in the paper Is the Qur'an the Word of God? But whereas in that study we came up with much devastating data against the credibility of the Qur'an, the same criteria levelled at the Bible proves to be quite different, as it corroborates not only the authority for its credibility but substantiates its claim as the true and final Word of God. Consider:

(1) Manuscripts:

The Bible, a book, was initially made up of numerous manuscripts. Consequently a primary means for ascertaining its credibility are the number of copies from those manuscripts which are in one's possession. The more copies we have the better we can know if the document we now read corresponds with the original. It is much like a witness to an event. If we have only one witness to the event, there is the possibility that the witness's agenda or even an exaggeration of the event has crept in and we would never know the full truth. But if we have many witnesses, the probability that they all got it wrong becomes minute.

Because of time and wear many of the historical documents from the ancient world have few manuscripts to which we can refer. This is specially true when we consider the secular historians and philosophers. We only have eight copies of Herodotus's historical works, whose originals were written in 480-425 BC. Likewise, only 5 copies of Aristotle's writings have found their way to the 20th century, while only 10 copies of the writings of Caesar, along with another 20 copies of the historian Tacitus, and 7 copies from the historian Pliny, who all originally wrote in the first century, are available today (McDowell 1972:42). These are indeed very few.

When we consider the New Testament, however, we find a completely different scenario. We have today in our possession 5,300 known Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, another 10,000 Latin Vulgates, and 9,300 other early versions (MSS), giving us more than 24,000 manuscript copies of portions of the New Testament in existence! (taken from McDowell's Evidence That demands a Verdict, vol.1, 1972 pgs.40-48; and Time, January 23, 1995, pg.57). Though we do not have any originals, with such a wealth of documentation at our disposal with which to compare, we can delineate quite adequately what those originals contained.

What's more, a substantial number were written well before the compilation of the Qur'an. In fact, according to research done by Kurt and Barbara Aland, a total of 230 manuscript portions are currently in existence which pre-date 600 AD! These can be broken down into 192 Greek New Testament manuscripts, 5 Greek lectionaries containing scripture, and 33 translations of the Greek New Testament (Aland 1987:82-83). Some of the more important manuscripts are listed in the table in the next section.

Muslims are correct in assuming that not all of the manuscripts are identical. This only makes sense, however, since parchment, or vellum was not invented until the fourth century. Thus all documents previous to that date had to be written on Papyrus, which disintegrated over time and so had to be copied. The differences which we do find in these copies, therefore, can be attributed to scribal errors. These "errors" were bound to creep in considering the numerous copies which were needed to continue the line of succession. We will come back to this point in a later section.

The verses which are in doubt, however, make up only 40 lines (or 400 words) of the New Testament, which is one-half of one percent of the New Testament (McDowell 1990:46). Thus 99.5 % of the New Testament is pure. Yet, not one of these doubtful verses alters an article of faith or a precept of duty which is not abundantly sustained by other and undoubted passages found elsewhere. In other words, no fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith rests on any of these disputed reading.

(2) Dating:

Dating the Original writings:

Manuscripts from the ancient world are difficult to find. This is also true of the Biblical

manuscripts, as prior to the invention of parchment in the fourth century AD they were all written on Papyrus leaves, which, due to their early disintegration resulted in the original manuscripts having disappeared long ago. Yet, copies were made in order to make the writings more accessible to the wider church. It is from these copies that we have derived our current New Testament. The criticism is often made, however, that because we do not possess the originals the current documents remain suspect, due to the long gap which exists between the originals and the extent copies which we now have.

Yet, unlike the Qur'an which was compiled much more recently, we do not find with the Bible such an enormous gap of time between that which the Bible speaks about and when it was written down. In fact, outside of the book of Revelation and the three letters of John considered to have been written later, when we look at the rest of the New Testament books, there is no longer any solid basis for dating them later than 80 AD, which is within 50 years of the death of Jesus Christ (Robinson 1976:79). Most of the New Testament was likely written before the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and perhaps before the fire of Rome (64 AD), and the subsequent persecution of Christians, since none of these events are mentioned in any of the New Testament writings.

This same argument can be taken a step further. Take for instance the martyrdoms of James in 62 AD, Paul in 64 AD, and Peter in 65 AD. All were leaders in the nascent church. Thus their deaths were momentous events for the Christian community. Yet we find none of the deaths referred to in any of the 27 books of the New Testament (and significantly not in Acts, the most comprehensive historical record we have of the early church). The only explanation can be that they were all written prior to these events, and thus likely before 62 AD, or a mere 30 years after the death of Jesus, of whose life they primarily refer.

Comparing the copies with other ancient Manuscripts:

A further criticism concerns whether the copies we possess are credible. Since we do not possess the originals, people ask, how can we be sure they are identical to them? The initial answer is that we will never be completely certain, for there is no means at our disposal to reproduce the originals. This has always been a problem with all known ancient documents. Yet this same question is rarely asked of other historical manuscripts which we refer to constantly. If they are held to be credible, let's then see how the New Testament compares with them. Let's compare below the time gaps for the New Testament documents with other credible secular documents.

<u>Author</u>	<u>Date Written</u>	<u>Earliest Copy</u>	<u>Time Span</u>	<u>Copies (extent)</u>
Secular Manuscripts:				
Herodotus (History)	480 - 425 BC	900 AD	1,300 years	8
Thucydides (History)	460 - 400 BC	900 AD	1,300 years	?
Aristotle (Philosopher)	384 - 322 BC	1,100 AD	1,400 years	5
Caesar (History)	100 - 44 BC	900 AD	1,000 years	10
Pliny (History)	61 - 113 AD	850 AD	750 years	7
Suetonius (Roman History)	70 - 140 AD	950 AD	800 years	?
Tacitus (Greek History)	100 AD	1,100 AD	1,000 years	20
Biblical Manuscripts: (note these are individual manuscripts)				
Magdalene Ms (Matthew 26)	1st century	50-60 AD	co-existent(?)	
John Rylands (John)	90 AD	130 AD	40 years	
Bodmer Papyrus II (John)	90 AD	150-200 AD	60-110 years	
Chester Beatty Papyri (N.T.)	1st century	200 AD	150 years	
Diatessaron by Tatian (Gospels)	1st century	200 AD	150 years	
Codex Vaticanus (Bible)	1st century	325-350 AD	275-300 years	
Codex Sinaiticus (Bible)	1st century	350 AD	300 years	
Codex Alexandrinus (Bible)	1st century	400 AD	350 years	
(Total New Testament manuscripts = 5,300 Greek MSS, 10,000 Latin Vulgates, 9,300 others = <u>24,000</u> copies)				

(Total MSS compiled prior to 600 AD = 230)

There were several historians of the ancient world whose works are quite popular. *Thucydides*, who wrote History of the Peloponnesian War, lived from 460 BC to 400 BC. Virtually everything we know about the war comes from his history. Yet, the earliest copy of any manuscripts of *Thucydides'* work dates around 900 AD, a full 1,300 years later! The Roman historian *Suetonius* lived between AD 70 to 140 AD. Yet the earliest copy of his book The Twelve Caesars is dated around AD 950, a full 800 years later. The chart above reveals the time gaps of these and other works from the ancient world and compares them to the earliest New Testament manuscripts (taken from McDowell 1972:42, & Bruce 1943:16-17).

What one notices almost immediately from the table is that the New Testament manuscript copies which we possess today were compiled very early, a number of them hundreds of years before the earliest copy of a secular manuscript. This not only shows the importance the early Christians gave to preserving their scriptures, but the enormous wealth we have today for early Biblical documentation.

What is even more significant however, are the differences in time spans between the original manuscripts and the copies of both the biblical and secular manuscripts. It is well known in historical circles that the closer a document can be found to the event it describes the more credible it is. The time span for the biblical manuscript copies listed above are all within 350 years of the originals, some as early as 130-250 years and one even purporting to coexist with the original (i.e. the Magdalene Manuscript fragments of Matthew 26), while the time span for the secular manuscript copies are much greater, between 750-1,400 years! This indeed gives enormous authority to the biblical manuscript copies, as no other ancient piece of literature can make such close time comparisons.

A special note needs to be given to the Magdalene Manuscript, as the new dating for the writing of these manuscript fragments to between 50-68 AD, by Dr. Thiede in 1995-1996, if it is correct, puts the earliest extent MSS for the book of Matthew within 20-30 years of the accounts to which it refers! We do not know if it comes from the original itself, but irregardless, the early dating points out that it was written while Matthew and the early apostles who could corroborate its authenticity were still living (Time, January 23, 1995, pg.57). This indeed points to a scripture which is as authoritative now as it was when it was conceived.

(3) Eyewitness accounts:

We also have many internal eyewitnesses (other Christians, who had accompanied Jesus during His ministry) who were still alive during the time these books were written. They would have remembered what had or had not happened. Thus, any of the claims could have been corroborated or refuted by those to whom the books were addressed. Furthermore there would have been no reason for them to fabricate their accounts, since they had nothing to gain, and everything to lose were they to do so. Almost every New Testament writer (excluding John) was martyred for what they believed and wrote. Certainly they would not have chosen the ultimate price, their lives, to perpetuate a lie. The fact that they were all prepared to pay such a high price proves the accuracy of their accounts. Indeed, the writers knew they would be held accountable, and even allude to this in their writings. Take the example of Luke:

Luke 1:1-3= "...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." Luke is referring here to the disciples, those who accompanied Jesus, and knew better than anyone what He said and did.

Acts 2:22= "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man **attested to you** by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him **in your midst**, just as **you yourselves know...**" Here Luke refers to those living in Israel, the Jews, who would have been the first to find error in what he said, as they had little love for the rabbi they called 'the Christ'.

Acts 26:24-26= "...Paul said, 'I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter the words of sober truth. For **the king knows about these matters**, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that **none of these things escape his notice**; for this **has not been done in a corner.**" Finally Luke (quoting Paul) points to a secular Roman official and a Jewish king as witnesses to what had been said and done.

Any one of these witnesses could have contradicted that which was being written, and that is why Luke refers to them, challenging them to remember what they themselves had seen and heard. Nothing he

wrote could escape their notice, for “nothing had been done in a corner.” (see also: Luke 3:1, John 19:35, II Peter 1:16; I John 1:3)

(4) Hostile Accounts:

Along with the eyewitnesses of the disciples, there were others who would have been delighted to find a fault with the New Testament writers. These were the enemies of Christianity, the Jewish and Roman authorities who sought to destroy the work of Jesus while He was still alive. Yet, what is interesting is that these enemies of Christianity did not so much try to contradict the claims of the early Christians about such events as, for example, the resurrection, as they instead tried to offer other explanations for the events. Take for example the account in Matthew 28:12-15 of the Jewish leaders once they had heard that the body of Jesus had disappeared:

When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, "Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him away while we slept.' And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure." So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.

Had Jesus not risen from the dead, there certainly would have been overwhelming testimony to that effect. Indeed, as we have seen in the last section with Paul arguing before the Roman governor Festus (Acts 26:24-26), the early Christians sometimes appealed to the knowledge of current events of their hearers in making their case for Christianity.

There were also secular historians present who were recording what took place, who were Jewish and Greek. If anyone would have rejected what was being written, they would have been the first, as the Christians were not members of their community, and, in some cases, were even detested by the others. We have the historical accounts of a number of them:

1) **Thallus**, a Greek historian who (as quoted by Julius Africanus) wrote in 52 AD of the crucifixion, even mentioning that the day suddenly turned dark (McDowell 1990:201).

2) **Tacitus** a Roman historian who wrote The Annals of Imperial Rome, between 80-84 AD, mentions the death of Christ, maintaining that it happened during the reign of Tiberius'. But that was not all, because he specifies that it was by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilate, echoing the Gospel account exactly (McDowell 1990:200).

3) **Josephus** a Jewish historian, living in Rome, who wrote towards the end of the century (90-95 AD) not only of the death of Jesus, and of the martyrdom of the Jesus' brother, James, but mentions the martyrdom of John the Baptist as well. He also refers to the resurrection three days later, but in a document whose reliability is hotly contested (McDowell 1990:199).

4) **Suetonius**, the historian, in his The Twelve Caesars, mentions the expulsion from Rome of the followers of Crestus (a latin reference to Christ), by the emperor Claudius, which is referred to in Acts 18:2 (Suetonius, 1989:202).

4) **Pliny the Younger**, a Roman author and administrator who wrote in 112 AD of the Christian community in Asia Minor, and of their devotion to Christ (McDowell 1990:200).

All of these historians wrote of events which we find in the Bible, particularly pointing to the crucifixion, a historical fact denied by the Qur'an (sura 4:157). Though hostile, these accounts, nonetheless, corroborate that which we find in the gospels and in the letters of Paul.

The fact that the New Testament writers dared to write about all they had seen and heard, knowing full well that both friendly and hostile witnesses would follow their every word makes it reasonable to believe the veracity of their testimony.

(5) Versions or Translations:

Besides the 24,000 extant manuscripts mentioned earlier we also have more than 15,000 existing copies of the various versions written in the **Latin** and **Syriac** (Christian Aramaic), some of which were written around 150 AD, such as the Syriac Peshitta (150-250 AD) (McDowell 1990:47).

Because Christianity was a missionary faith from its very inception (Matthew 28:19-20), the scriptures were immediately translated into the known languages of that period. For that reason other written translations appeared later on, such as **Coptic** translations (early 3rd and 4th centuries), **Armenian** (400 AD), **Gothic** (4th century), **Georgian** (5th century), **Ethiopic** (6th century), and **Nubian** (6th century) (McDowell 1972:48-50). The fact that we have so many translations of the New Testament points to its authenticity, as it would have been almost impossible (had the disciples or later followers wanted to corrupt or forge its contents), for them to have amassed all of the translations from the outlying areas and changed each one so that there would have been the uniformity which we find witnessed in these translations today.

(6) Lectionaries:

The practice of reading passages from the New Testament books at worship services began from the 6th century, so that today we have 2,135 lectionaries which have been catalogued from this period (McDowell 1972:52). If there had been a forgery, they too would have all had to have been changed.

(7) Early Church Father's Letters:

But possibly the greatest attestation for the authority of our New Testament are the masses of quotations from its pages by the early church fathers. These were the first generation of Christian leaders. We find numerous quotes of the New Testament from their personal correspondence. For example, Clement of Alexandria, who lived about 150 AD - 212 AD has 2,406 quotes from all but three books of the New Testament. Tertullian, who was an elder of the church in Carthage and who lived between 160 AD - 220 AD quotes the New Testament 7,258 times. Of these quotes, around 3,800 are from the gospels themselves. Other quotes from Church fathers include Justin Martyr, 330 quotes; Irenaeus, 1,819 quotes; Origen, 17,922 quotes, Hippolytus, 1,378 quotes; and Eusebius, 5,176 quotes, making a total of 36,289 quotes of the New Testament from just those listed above.

Dean Burgon, who did a study of all the early church father writings, found in all 86,489 quotes from the church fathers (McDowell 1972:50-52; 1990:47-48). And they are not all late. In fact, there are 32,000 quotations from the New Testament found in writings before the council of Nicea in 325 AD (McDowell Evidence, 1972:52). J. Harold Greenlee points out that the quotations of the scripture in the works of the early church writers are so extensive that the New Testament could virtually be reconstructed from them without the use of New Testament MSS.

Sir David Dalrymple sought to do this, and from the second and third century writings of the church fathers he found the **entire New Testament quoted except for eleven verses** (McDowell 1972:50-51; 1990:48)! Thus, we could throw the New Testament away and still reconstruct it with the simple help of these letters.

Some examples of these are (from McDowell's Evidence..., 1972:51):

Clement (30- 95) quotes from various sections of the New Testament.

Ignatius (70-110 AD) knew the apostles and quoted directly from 15 of the 27 books.

Polycarp (70-156 AD) a disciple of John who quoted often from the New Testament.

[C] ARCHAEOLOGY

(1900=Abraham, 1700=Joseph, 1447=Moses, 1000=David):

If we are to take the Biblical record seriously, we will need to inquire further as to whether there are other sources which we can turn to for a corroboration of its account. Since we are dealing with a book which often speaks of history (referring to people, places, and events), probably the best and easiest way to study that history is to go to the area where that history took place. It is not hard to understand that history never takes place in a vacuum. It always leaves behind its forgotten fingerprints, waiting dormant in the ground to be discovered, dug up and deciphered. It is therefore, important that we also get our didgets dirty and take a look at the treasures which our archaeologist friends are discovering to ascertain if they have been able to reward us with any clues as to the authenticity of the Biblical account.

What has become evident over the last few decades is that the most fruitful area for a confirmation of the Bible has come from archaeology, for it is here that the past can speak to us the clearest concerning what happened then. Let's, therefore, go and find out what it has to show by first asking what the experts have to say.

(1) What the Archaeologists say

(taken from McDowell's Evidences 1972:65-67):

G.E. Wright states, "We shall probably never prove that Abram really existed.. but what we can prove is that his life and times, as reflected in the stories about him, fit perfectly within the early second millennium, but imperfectly within any later period."

Sir Frederic Kenyon mentions, "The evidence of archaeology has been to re-establish the authority of the Old Testament, and likewise to augment its value by rendering it more intelligible through a fuller knowledge of its background and setting."

William F. Albright (a renowned archaeologist) says, “The excessive skepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the 18th and 19th centuries, certain phases which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source of history.”

Millar Burrows of Yale states, “On the whole, archaeological work has unquestionably strengthened confidence in the reliability of the scriptural record.”

Joseph Free confirms that while thumbing through the book of Genesis, he mentally noted that each of the 50 chapters are either illuminated or confirmed by some archaeological discovery, and that this would be true for most of the remaining chapters of the Bible, both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Nelson Glueck (a Jewish Reformed scholar and archaeologist) probably gives us the greatest support for the Bible when he states, “To date no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a single, properly understood biblical statement.”

These testimonies indeed affirm vividly that the rocks themselves confirm the authenticity for the historicity of the Biblical accounts superbly. Let’s now look at some of the examples.

(2) Old Testament Examples

(taken from McDowell’s Evidences 1972:68-70):

The initial assumption by many earlier archaeologists was that the Old Testament was written not by the authors described within its text but by later historians during the much later second to sixth century BC, and then redacted back onto the great prophets such as Moses and David, etc... Many of these assumptions are no longer correct. Consider:

1) **Pentateuch:** The skeptics contended that the Pentateuch couldn’t have been written by Moses, because there was no writing that early. Then the **Black Stele** was found with the detailed laws of *Hammurabi* which were written 300 years before Moses.

2) According to historians there were no **Hittites** at the time of Abraham. Now we know from inscriptions of that period that there was 1,200 years of Hittite civilization.

3) Historians also told us that no such people as the **Horites** existed. We find them mentioned in the genealogy of Esau in Gen.36:20. Yet now they have been discovered as a group of warriors who lived in Mesopotamia during the Patriarchal period.

4) **Abraham’s name:** appears in Babylonia as a personal name at the very period of the patriarchs, though the redactionists believed he was a fictitious character.

5) **The field of Abram in Hebron:** is mentioned in 918 BC, by *Shishak* of Egypt. He had just finished warring in Palestine and inscribed on the walls of his temple at *Karnak* the name of the great patriarch, proving that even this earlier Abraham was known not in Arabia but in Palestine.

6) **The Beni Hasan Tomb:** from the Abrahamic time, depicts Asiatics coming to Egypt during a famine.

7) ***Armana tablets:** (from Egypt) mentions *Habiru* or *Apiru* in Hebrew, which was first applied to Abraham in Genesis 14:13.

8) ***Ebla tablets:** 17,000 tablets from *Tell Mardikh* in Northern Syria, from 2300 BC Shows us that a thousand years before Moses, laws, customs and events were recorded in writing in that part of the world, and that the judicial proceedings and case laws were very similar to the Deuteronomy law code (i.e. Deut.22:22-30 codes on punishment for sex offenses). One tablet mentions and lists in exact sequence the five cities of *Sodom*, *Gomorrah*, *Admah*, *Zeboiim* and *Zoar* as found in Genesis 14:8.

9) ***Mari tablets:** (from the Euphrates) mentions *Arriyuk*, or *Arioch* of Genesis 14, and lists *Nahor*, *Harran* (from Genesis 24:10), as well as the names Benjamin and *Habiru*.

10) ***Nuzi tablets:** (from Iraq) speaks about a number of customs which we find in the Pentateuch, such as:

- a) a barren wife giving a handmaiden to her husband
- b) a bride chosen for the son by the father
- c) a dowry paid to the father-in-law
- d) work done to pay a dowry (i.e. Jacob)
- e) the unchanging oral will of a father (i.e. Isaac)
- f) a father giving his daughter a slave-girl (i.e. Leah, Rachel)
- g) the sentence of death for stealing cult gods (i.e. Jacob).

11) **The doors of Sodom:** (Tell Beit Mirsim) 2200-1600 BC are heavy doors needed for security; the same which we find in Genesis 19:9. Yet, if this account had been written between 900-600 BC we

would have read about arches and curtains, as security was no longer such a concern then.

12) **Joseph's price:** was 20 shekels, according to Genesis 37:28, which is the correct price for 1,700 BC. An earlier account would have been cheaper, while a later account would have been more.

13) **Joseph's Tomb:** In Joshua 24:32 speaks of Joseph's tomb. A tomb has now been found in *Shechem* with a mummy, and next to the mummy sits an Egyptian official's sword!

14) **Jericho's** excavation showed that the walls fell outwards, echoing Joshua 6:20, enabling the attackers to climb over and into the town, yet according to the laws of physics walls always fall inwards!

15) **David's** capture of Jerusalem recounted in II Samuel 5:6-8 and I Chronicles 11:6 speak of Joab using water shafts built by the *Jebusites* to surprise them and defeat them. Archaeological excavations by R.A.S. Macalister, J.G. Duncan, and Kathleen Kenyon on *Ophel* now have found these water shafts.

16) The account of **Daniel**, according to the sceptical historians would have had to have been written in the second century and not the sixth century BC because of all the historical detail found in its content. Yet now the sixth century's East India Inscription corresponds with the Daniel 4:30 account of Nebuchadnezzar's building. Either way it is amazing.

17) **Dead Sea Scrolls** written around 100 BC show us that outside of minute copying errors (which we will deal with later) it is identical to the Massoretic Text written in 916 AD.

18) **The Oldest Biblical Inscription** have now been identified in the Hinnom valley (across from the southern walls of Jerusalem's Old City). In 1979 two archaeologists found 1,000 items of jewelry and pottery in 9 burial caves. Two tiny silver scrolls with Biblical inscriptions rolled up in charms were also included (confirmed by the Tel Aviv archaeologist Gabriel Barkay in the Associated Press, 1979). The inscriptions contained the oldest Biblical inscriptions ever found. They recorded the priestly blessing found in Numbers 6:24-26, which reads: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." The inscriptions, which are now housed in the Israel Museum are believed to be from the seventh century BC making them 2,600 years old, and over four hundred years older than the Dead Sea Scrolls, which used to be the oldest Biblical manuscript in our possession (Grant Jeffrey's, The Signature of God 1996:15-16).

19) Joseph Free states: "New discoveries now show us that a host of supposed errors and contradictions are not errors at all: 'that *Sargon* existed and lived in a palatial dwelling 12 miles north of *Ninevah*, that the *Hittites* were a significant people, that the concept of a sevenfold lamp existed in the early Iron Age, that a significant city given in the record of David's empire lies far to the north, and that *Belshazzar* existed and ruled over Babylon."

20) Discoveries from excavations at **Nuzu, Mari and Assyrian, Hittite, Sumerian and Eshunna Codes** points out that Hebrew poetry, Mosaic legislation as well as the Hebrew social customs all fit the period and region of the patriarchs.

(3) New Testament Examples:

(taken from McDowell's Evidences 1972:70-73):

1) The practice of returning to one's home during a census has been corroborated by an Egyptian papyrus of that period.

2) The **Pavement** where Jesus was tried (named **Gabbatha**-John 19:13) has now been recently located in the Tower of Antonia which was the Roman military headquarters in Jerusalem.

3) The **Pool of Bethesda** has now been located while excavating near the church of St. Anne, in the N.E. quarter of the old city, which was called *Bezetha* in the 1st century AD.

Yet, of particular interest to us in this discussion are the writings of **Luke**. Luke was the historian amongst the New Testament writers. Therefore, if we want to substantiate the authenticity for the New Testament account, we need to go to Luke, and find if there is any archaeological data which can corroborate his writings.

4) The Inscriptions found in Corinth confirm Paul's mention of a Hebrew Synagogue, where he debated (Acts 18:4-7), and the meat market (I Cor.10:25).

5) Luke's contention that **Lystra and Derbe** were in **Lycaonia**, and that **Iconium** was not (Acts 14:6) was contradicted by the later Roman, **Cicero**. Yet an early monument confirms Luke's contention.

6) Due to archaeological finds, most of the ancient **cities** mentioned in Acts have now been identified.

7) Paul's reference to **Erastus** the treasurer of Corinth (Romans 16:23) has been confirmed by a pavement found in 1929 bearing his name.

8) Luke's use of the word **Meris** to maintain that Philippi was a "district" of Macedonia was doubted until inscriptions were found which use this very word to describe divisions of a district.

9) *Luke's usage of **Politarchs** to denote civil authority of Thessalonica (Acts 17:6) was doubted until some 19 inscriptions have been found that make use of this title, 5 of which are in reference to Thessalonica.

10) *Luke's usage of **Praetor** to describe a Philippian ruler instead of **duumvir** has been proven accurate, as the Romans used this term for magistrates of their colonies.

11) *Luke's usage of **Proconsul** as the title for Gallio (Acts 18:12) has been corroborated by the **Delphi Inscription** (52 AD) which states, "As Lusius Junius Gallio, my friend, and the proconsul of Achaia..." Gallio only held this position for one year.

12) *Luke's mention of **Quirinius** as the governor of Syria during the birth of Jesus has now been proven accurate by an inscription from Antioch.

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

In light of archaeological evidence, books such as Luke and Acts reflect the topography and conditions of the second half of the first century AD and do not reflect the conditions of any later date.

We have no reason to fear archaeology. In fact it is this very science which has done more to authenticate our scriptures than any other. Therefore, we encourage the secular archaeologists to dig, for as they dig we know they will only come closer to that which our scriptures have long considered to be the truth, and give us rise to claim that indeed our Bible has the right to claim true authority as the only verified Word of God.

IV] EVIDENCES FOR THE BIBLE'S AUTHORITY:

Yet for many people that is not enough. There must be other evidence beyond the Bible's claim for itself and the wealth of documentation which leads us to an assertion for not only its inspiration but for its authority. And there is, for the witness of the Bible itself testifies to its authority. Consider:

[A] Its Fulfilled Prophecies:

The Bible is authoritative because it contains fulfilled prophecy. Scripture cannot be called authentic unless it comes from the hands of God, via one of His prophets. One of the primary means for delineating the authority of any scripture is by ascertaining whether it can stand the scrutiny of prophecy; that is, whether it can tell us something about the world which only God could know, something which has not yet come to pass, but which can be verified at some future date. For instance, this was a constant difficulty for Muhammad, who, according to the Qu'ran, numerous times mentioned the distrust of others towards him due to his inability to produce a miraculous sign which would substantiate his authority (suras 10:21 and 13:7,27). In fact Muhammad could not predict anything other than a future victory, a feat not uncommon for a leader of warriors on the eve of battle.

Those predictions which cover the longest duration are the most valuable for us. Yet, according to the principle which we find in **Deuteronomy 18:21-22; Isaiah 43:9; and John 13:18-21**, other predictions must be announced which are short-term, which can be verified by contemporary's of the prophet, to identify him as a prophet, and so give credibility to the longer, future predictions.

The Bible is replete with fulfilled predictions. In the paper Muhammad, a Christian Apologetic we offered Biblical examples concerning Moses and Isaiah, showing how they made prophecies which were fulfilled immediately, or the next day (Defeat of Egyptians=Exodus 14:13-14,27-28, holding the sun back=Isaiah 38:5-8 and Sennacherib's rout=Isaiah 37:21-38), and others which were fulfilled between 150-200 years later, or even centuries later; and others that are just now being fulfilled (Israelites to Babylon=Isaiah 39:6-7; blessing/curses for Israel=Deuteronomy 28:1,15,64-66; 30:1,4-5; the fall of Babylon=Isaiah 13:1,19-20; and the return from exile=Isaiah 11:11-12).

[B] Its extraordinary Unity and Harmony:

Another evidence for the Bible's authority is its extraordinary unity and harmony. The Bible, made up of the Old and New Testament, consists of sixty six books, written by more than thirty prophets and apostles, and written in times of tremendous change and diversity, spanning more than 1,500 years. Yet it holds to a common unifying idea throughout; that God is at work in history with the intent to redeem

and save humanity from death, and thereby bring them back into relationship with Him, as had been intended from before creation.

That so many individuals from so many different backgrounds, over such a long time, could agree on just one unifying though important theme with such consistency and coherency speaks not to the work of mere mortals, but points to the divine intervention of God Himself. No other book or scripture can even come close to making the same claim.

[C] Its amazing Circulation:

But that is not all. The amazing circulation of the Bible augments its authority. According to the latest figures, the whole Bible has been translated into some 260 existing languages, while the New Testament has been translated into 580 more. A further 920 languages have some portion of the Scripture. This means that today, 93% of the world's population can read the Bible in their mother tongue (!)

In fact, at this moment there is a translation going on in 1167 languages! It is estimated that the New Testament is published in an additional language every two weeks, and that every 10 days or so, work leading to a new scripture translation is commencing in another language somewhere in the world. At this rate it will take just 60 years before all groups of peoples will have a portion of scripture in their own mother tongue (!).

Is it therefore, no surprise that the Bible continues to be the best-selling book in the history of humanity! For instance, according to the latest statistics available, in 1988 the Bible Society alone distributed nearly 700 million Scripture portions, over 14 million Bibles, and nearly 13 million New Testaments in over 100 countries (!) Somewhere behind all those figures speaks clearly of a God who desires to see His word shared to every nation, tribe, people and language.

[D] Its Appeal to all Classes everywhere:

The appeal of the Bible to all classes everywhere points also to its authority. God's first command to Adam was to be fruitful and multiply. His second command to Adam was to "fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule..." (Genesis 1:28).

At the beginning of this century, in 1900, there were only 558 million Christians in the world. In another five years, in 2,000 AD there will be an estimated 2,020 million (2.2 billion) Christians. Over a quarter of them will live in South America (565 million). Another quarter will be in Europe (547 million), with 390 million in Africa, another 255 million in North America and 250 million in Asia (!) Outside of Asia, with its enormous population, this gives us a pretty even distribution of population, representing both the rich and poor countries around the world. Does this not show the universal appeal to God's scriptures?

In the southern half of Africa, as well as most of both North and South America, and the majority of the European nations, Christianity will continue to be the most popular religion. Thus, only in the Muslim world, Hindu India, and in Communist China will the Bible not have much influence.

[E] Its Wisdom and high Moral Teaching:

The wisdom and moral teachings found in the Bible, which have historically been used as a basis of law and moral teaching around the world points to its authority. The Ten Commandments, the Golden Rule, as well as the Sermon on the Mount are just a few examples of Biblical laws which are used as principles adopted by most societies today as a foundation for proper practice.

The Bible is the only holy book in circulation today which gives **principles** (not just legalistic laws and rigid regulations) that cover all areas of life (social, economic, political, as well as religious). From the creation in Genesis, to the Psalms of David and the Songs of Solomon, on through to the sayings of Jesus in the Gospels, and the teachings of Paul in Romans and his epistles, we find the inspired wisdom of God reaching out to instruct and warn those who open its pages. It is no wonder, then, that so many, though they often choose not to follow it, still respect its authority and content, and look to it as a last resort in times of crisis.

What is unique is that these principles can be, and are, re-interpreted for each culture and period in history, so that the Christian faith not only becomes an applicable set of beliefs which promises us eternal life with God after we die, but it gives us patterns (universal and absolute) by which we can live our lives on earth while we wait ("steak on our plate while we wait rather than pie in the sky when we die").

What I find intriguing are the many examples of non-Christian countries today who have borrowed the Biblically inspired societal and ethical laws which have come to them, ironically, via the experience of colonialism (i.e. Hindu India, or Muslim Senegal), or out of appreciation for their practicality

in today's world (i.e. Japan which has no colonial history, yet has modeled its laws on the U.S. constitution, which is itself modeled on Biblical principles).

Take the example of the UN Declaration of Human Rights (taken from Jan Hjarpe's article titled: "The Contemporary Debate in the Muslim World on the definition of 'Human Rights'", in K. Ferdinand & M. Mozaffari (eds.), Islam: State and Society, 1988). Here is a secular document which the modern world today has formulated as a standard for all nations and peoples to live by. As we look through the articles we find a definite Biblical thread leaving its imprint, in almost direct contrast to the more severe Shari'ah laws promulgated by Islamic governments.

Article 4 prohibits slavery. The only abolition movements were created and headed up by Christians in Europe and America (i.e. "the underground railway" in the U.S., the "Clapham Sect" in England), or missionaries serving in Africa (i.e. the creation of Sierra Leone for freed slaves). There has never been an abolition movement in Islam, because the Qur'an contains rules for slaves, their rights, and the slave trade, so that the non-slave status is in itself not a 'Human Right.'

Article 5 states that "no one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." While the Bible specifically forbids the use of violence (Matthew 5:39; 26:52; Luke 6:27-31; and I Corinthians 13), the Qur'an stipulates amputations, floggings, and stonings for punishment (*Hudud*) of a variety of offenses (i.e. Article 61 in Iran's constitution allows these three punishments).

Articles 7,8,10 states that all are equal before the law. While the Bible maintains that "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28), the same can not be said of Shari'ah law. This law makes distinctions between the status of Muslim and non-Muslims in legal matters (i.e. the *wergild*, or the price to be paid for the murder of a Muslim versus that of a non-Muslim Dhimmi is in the proportion of 10 to 1, while between men and women it is 2 to 1).

Article 16 allows men and women, irregardless of religion to marry and have families, and to have equal rights for divorce. While this is pretty much parallel with the Biblical understanding of marriage (outside of the admonition to not be "unequally yoked," as well as the prohibition by Paul that all church leaders must have one wife, and must not divorce), the Shari'ah law prohibits marriage between a Muslim woman and a non-Muslim man, and gives the man (but not the woman) an unconditional right to divorce.

Article 18 insists that "everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion: this right includes freedom to change his or her religion or belief..." The Bible categorically affirms this article (John 3:16), as it is God's desire that every individual has the right to choose or reject Him (Romans 10:9-15). Islam prohibits, customarily by capital punishment, apostasy, and enjoins Muslims to fight those who do not believe in Allah until they acquiesce (see Suras 8:39; 9:5, 29; and 47:4).

Ironically, in its attempt to secularize its society, Turkey, in article 24 of its constitution, has made illegal the notion of religious law as a law for society, and so has forbidden the use of certain titles, garments and outfits, as well as religious propaganda which then is contrary to article 18 of the UN Declaration.

Article 19 permits the freedom of opinion and expression. While the Bible has little to say concerning censorship (it simply prohibits anyone from changing scripture in Revelation 22:18-19), past and present history has demonstrated that Muslim governments have had a total limitation of the freedom for expression and of the press.

An example of the loss of the freedom of expression is noted in the recent cases in Pakistan where over 20 Christians and hundreds of Ahmadis have been imprisoned under the 'Section 295-C blasphemy law'. The Blasphemy law was only applied to Islam, and stipulated that no-one could say anything against the prophet or his family. In 1980 the punishment was three years in prison. In 1982 criticism of the Qur'an was added to the law. By 1986 the punishment was increased to life imprisonment. Then in 1990 the law stipulated that words, innuendo and even insinuation against Muhammad or the Qur'an, on the witness of one good Muslim, would be punishable by life imprisonment or death. Today the punishment is death. One may say that England has a blasphemy law as well, applied to Christianity alone. Yet, who has been punished under the law? No-one, nor will the law ever be used, as it is barbaric and unworkable. On the other hand, many are punished in the Islamic state of Pakistan and have been imprisoned because of this blasphemy law, such as the boy Salamat Masih, the bangle vendor Chand Bakhat, Gul Masih, Mohammad Arshad Javaid and many more. Others have even been killed (i.e. the paraplegic watch-repairer Tahir Iqbal, the teacher Naimat Ahmer, and the laborer Bando Masih) (from the Pakistani journal "Newline" November/December 1993, pgs.24-36B), and all for the simple reason that they allegedly 'criticized the prophet.' This points out just how dangerous it is for non-Muslims to criticize Islam.

Article 21 declares that “everyone has the right of equal access to public service...and that the will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government...” The Bible (in the New Testament) specifically separates the realm of church and state, and thus puts the authority of the state into the hands of the people set there by God as His “servants,” rather than letting the church take on that responsibility (see Romans 13:1-7). In Islam an affiliation to Islam is often regarded as a prerequisite for certain higher posts in the administration of the state. In fact only a Muslim may carry the highest office, that of caliph.

What we notice in all this is the tendency by ‘secular’ governments today to borrow the very Biblical principles which they attempted to distance themselves from in order to maintain a truly “secular” set of laws and guidelines. It is because of the universal application of the Biblical law that they have been forced to borrow that which they no longer hold to be authoritative.

On the other hand, increasingly we are bombarded with an invigorated Islamic conservatism stipulating the need to return to the canonized Qur’anic understanding of law. This view holds that the Law of God is above all other laws; that since God is the creator of Man, His law must be “Human rights” by definition.

Yet, ironically, in most parts of the Muslim world there exists, as a legacy from the colonial era, a more or less secular legal system applied in nearly all the domains, with the common exception that of family law (Hjarpe 1988:30). The Muslims in their own countries have had to fall back on Biblical principles of law due to the impracticality of imposing 7th-9th century “inspired” *shari’ah* laws within a 20th century setting (i.e. the impossibility of Pakistan’s punitive amputations, and urban families vs. rural inheritance laws). This point alone has special significance. Any scripture which claims to come from God must therefore have universal application in all cultures, both at the time of its revelation as well as throughout history, including the present.

Most of the modern world acclaims, by voluntary choice, the applicability of Biblical principles in the 20th century, even though many times they fail to live up to those ideals in practice. By contrast, there are no Muslim countries who can claim to live by the strict Islamic directives found in the Qur’an. This is true even in those countries where they have gained absolute control, or where they have been able to influence domestic laws for their own communities. The excuse always given is that Muslim countries today are led by irreligious and incompetent Muslims, and if only there were real Muslims in power we would see a stricter code of Islamic practice enforced, which would do away with all of the 20th century problems, such as poverty, crime, and moral decay.

In response, could we not say that Western countries are, likewise, led by irreligious and incompetent people, many of whom make no claim to be Christians? Yet, the Biblical principles which are still evident and practised in our western laws manage to bring about a just and democratic society, which in turn allows for an improved economic environment, the envy of which is best exemplified by the millions of Muslims who would love to live within its jurisdiction if given the chance, and the thousands who actually do? A case of Rex-Lex versus Lex-Rex.

[F] Its life-changing power:

Finally, the evidence for the Bible’s authority is best exemplified by its life-changing power. Christians make an increasing impact on societies through the spreading of the Bible in the world. Though 66,000 people die each day (around 46 each minute) without hearing about the Bible, missionaries are trying hard to reach those who still remain, travelling to all corners of the earth to share the gospel with those who have not heard its message. As a result there are now 138,500 Protestant missionaries working to spread the message of the Bible around the world (85,000 from North America, 35,000 from other western countries, and 30,000 from non-western countries (Johnstone Operation World, 1993:404). Because of their ongoing work 3,500 new churches are being planted every week. Yet even more impressive is the figure which reveals that as a result of their efforts **70,000 people receive Christ daily!** In fact, in comparison with Islam, the conversion rate of Evangelical Protestants is double that of Islam (5% for Evangelicals versus only 2.5% for Islam) (Johnstone 1993:183).

One need only go into any Christian book shop to see the myriad of testimonials by those who have given their hearts to Christ because of the truth they found within the pages of the Bible, to find proof of its changing power. **Never in the history of humanity have so many been affected so much, by so few, and all because of the life-changing power which the Bible has for those who seek its truth.**

What, then does this tell us about the Bible's authority? Can we say that our scriptures are authoritative though they have not come to us as direct pronouncements from God (what the Muslims claim as *nazil*)? Indeed we can. Though Muslims, like us, admit that God works via His prophets and apostles, they have difficulty accepting that God would permit the writers to use their own personalities and experiences to explain God's transcendent ideas within the limited understanding of His creation, His children on earth. Ironically, the Bible, considered the work of finite, though inspired men, ranks far above the Qur'an as a recognized literary masterpiece, a book which Muslims believe comes unpolluted by human interference.

Yet, the best evidence for the Bible is not its literary qualities but the proven claims which it makes. The Bible speaks clearly of its inspiration, as does the testimony which the Bible provides in its fulfilled prophecy, in its unity and harmony, its amazing circulation to all classes of people everywhere, in its wisdom and high moral teachings, as well as its practical laws and principles, and finally, in its life-changing power.

If God truly created the world for His pleasure, He would have created it to work to a pattern. This pattern we would expect to find revealed in His word; as indeed it is. It should not surprise us, then, that, according to the latest statistics, Christianity, because it holds the repository of Biblical principles and thinking, is the fastest conversion-growing religion in the world today (Johnstone 1993:183). What better testimony could one ask to demonstrate the Bible's claim to be the only revealed and inspired Word of God.

[II Timothy 3:16]

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.

[IV] ANSWERING THE CRITICS

We now move on to specific difficulties which Muslims have with our scriptures. I don't think there is a Christian who has not felt frustration and sometimes humiliation when talking with a Muslim concerning the validity of their scriptures, or its authority. Too many times the conversations lead to the oft-spoken belief by Muslims that our scriptures are no longer reliable, which insinuates that what we believe in is no longer reliable as well.

Yet, in reality, it is more likely that it is their perception of our scriptures which is no longer reliable, since much of what they believe concerning our scriptures comes from misguided, ill-informed and out-dated sources.

We have already dealt with three areas of contention, that of revelation, inspiration, and an historical analysis, and have come to the conclusion that due to our differences of interpretation, what we as Christians look for as God's revelation and inspiration as well as the ongoing historical critique does not parallel at all with that of the Muslims. As a result, both parties end up judging the other's scriptures by using their own criteria. It is not surprising, then, that the two sides cannot see eye-to-eye. What, then, are the criticisms Muslims level at our scriptures, and how can we best answer these criticisms?

[A] Common Misconceptions:

As we move through this paper it will soon become apparent that many of the problems between our two faiths find their root in common misconceptions Muslims have concerning our scriptures. Let's look at four of their misconceptions:

(1) The New Testament is a newer or changed version of the Old Testament

There is a considerable degree of ignorance among Muslims regarding the character of the Christian Bible, especially in respect to its two major sections, the Old and New Testament.

Many Muslims assume we have two contradicting Testaments, and that the very existence of the New Testament presupposes that the Old Testament has been changed; that the former is a corrupted version of the latter. In fact, many Muslims believe that the real Old Testament, presumed to be the original scripture, no longer exists in its original form and has been interpolated by the New Testament, manipulated by the earlier church, or by Paul and his associates.

Similarly, they confuse the definition we give for our gospels, assuming we have four variant and contradicting versions of the New Testament, one written by Matthew, another written by Mark and so on... They wonder why God is not able to reveal His Truths adequately and comprehensively to one individual. Why does he require four?

These accusations underline the ignorance of the basic structure of the Bible, which presupposes an equally extensive ignorance of its contents. As long as Muslims continue to believe these illusions, accepting that such claims may appear to support the Muslim contention that the Bible has been changed, they will invite suspicion, as the very veracity for their illusion requires false notions for its support.

To begin with the Old and New Testaments are not tampered copies of each other, but rather are two entirely separate books. We dare not throw one out in lieu of the other. It is the entire 66 books (including the 39 from the Old Testament and 27 from the New) which constitute the Christian Bible.

Even the Qur'an itself mentions the distinction between the Old and New Testament, referring to one as the *Taurat* in Sura 5:43, the scriptures of the Jews, and to the other as the *Injil* in Sura 5:47, the scripture of the Christians. Thus, Muhammad was aware that the Jews and Christians possessed two different scriptures. In Sura 7:157 the Qur'an admits that the Jews and Christians were in possession of the *Taurat* and the *Injil* at the time of Muhammad, and that they were those books which these two groups themselves accepted as the Law and the Gospel respectively. Muslims who claim that the New Testament is a changed version of the Old Testament are therefore simply out of touch with their own holy book, the Qur'an. The Old Testament is the title Christians give to the Jewish Scriptures. We accept it as the unchanged, authentic word of God dating from the times of the prophets of whom it speaks (such as Moses, David, and others).

Muslims, rather than dismissing the Old Testament as a collection of inauthentic historical writings, would do well to understand the importance which the Old Testament holds in introducing and preparing the world to receive The Redeemer of the world, the promised Messiah.

The Old Testament prophets recognized that the redemption for the world would be fulfilled through this Messiah (Jeremiah 31:31,33). Thus, they prophesied His coming hundreds of times, even speaking specifically of when and where His birth would occur, why He would come, how He would die, and that He would physically rise again; all hundreds of years before the events.

The New Testament, on the other hand, is the historical record of the manner in which God fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, and established the new covenant. It contains the account of the life and teachings of the Messiah (the Gospels), the creation of the Church (Acts of the Apostles), an explanation of Christian beliefs and conduct (Epistles), and a description of the end times, when God's purpose for humanity will be fulfilled (Revelation). Understood in its entirety, its truth and its unity with the Old Testament Messianic message gives credibility to the Old Testament Scriptures which came before.

If Muslims would take the time to read both the Old and New Testament, they would not only see these prophecies clearly revealed, but just as clearly, see their fulfilment in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Until they read and understand the entire scope of scripture, from the beginning of creation to the end of God's work on earth, they would do well not to criticize its makeup.

How then should we answer the accusation that we have changed the Old Testament? To begin with, we need to set straight a common misunderstanding concerning the high view we hold towards God's Word. Unlike the Muslims, Christians do not believe that God's Word can ever be changed or corrupted, though it can be mis-copied, mis-translated and interpreted incorrectly. Therefore, we accept the Old Testament as the unchanged, genuine Word of God of pre-Christian times. Though it was written from 400-1,400 years before the New Testament, and is four times as long, it nonetheless is equally valid for us as Christians as God's inspired Word.

One must remember that the Old Testament has been carefully guarded by the Jews since before the time of Jesus. Thus, it is held to be the Word of God by two very different religions and has been scrupulously maintained by each one independently of the other. If one group had attempted to alter the Old Testament in any way, it would obviously have immediately been exposed by the other. Muslims must take that into account before making such rash accusations.

There are other evidences as well. The entire Old Testament text was translated from the original Hebrew into the Greek (known as the *Septuagint*) roughly two centuries before the time of Christ, so that it was widely circulated in the Greek-speaking world before Christ was born. To this day it is thoroughly consistent with our Old Testament, as well as the oldest Hebrew *Massoretic* texts which the Jews have had in their possession for over 1,000 years (since 916 AD).

Furthermore, the Dead Sea Scrolls, written some decades before Christ's birth (from 2nd century BC, to 1st cent. AD - McDowell 99:77), and discovered shortly after the 2nd World War, also parallel almost exactly the Old Testament Septuagint and Massoretic texts which we have today (i.e. Isaiah scroll is dated 125 BC, yet of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, only 17 letters are in question; 10 are a matter of spelling, 4 are conjunction changes, while the remaining 3 are the word 'light', added to verse 11, which doesn't change the meaning; so that in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one 3-letter word in question after 1,000 years. With the rest of Isaiah, 95% is word-for-word identical, and the remaining 5% is made up of obvious slips of the pen or variations in spelling [McDowell 99:78-79]).

We, therefore, not only have an independent translation into Greek, but also a number of handwritten texts in the original Hebrew, both of which predate the Christian era when the New Testament was written. Thus, it becomes almost impossible to believe that Christians could have changed it at any time in their history. There is now and has always been too much evidence available to try to suggest that the Old Testament has been changed or corrupted by Christians.

The Old and New Testament are separate yet complementing books. Muslims would do well to read the two books rather than base false assumptions that the Bible has been changed on their illusions about their content.

(2) Doesn't the New Testament abrogate the Old Testament?

Many Muslims have asked whether the New Testament, because it comes later, abrogates the Old Testament, much as the Qur'an, which is a later revelation, supposedly abrogates the Old and New Testaments, taken from their own perspective on abrogation, that a later verse can abrogate an earlier verse (Nasukh vs. Mansukh verses) and then applying such a criteria to scripture, suggesting that something was wrong with the first, forcing its replacement with another better revelation, which then would be replaced by the final and better revelation, the Qur'an.? The answer is an emphatic NO! The fact is that the two books deal with two distinct covenants made by God, one through Moses and the other through Jesus. Probably the best verses which describe this idea are those written in Jeremiah 31:31-34. Here we find the prophecy of the new covenant, a covenant whose laws will be in the **minds** and written on the **hearts** of the believers, and will replace that of the Old Covenant, which was a covenant written on **stone** with many rules and regulations.

The old covenant, given by God to Moses had been put aside, and the new covenant, made through Jesus, had come into being for the salvation of all who believed in Him. This is why we call our scriptures the New Testament, because it outlines the enactment and fulfilment of the old covenant. We call the former scriptures the Old Testament for the same reason, namely that they contain the record of the old covenant. That covenant was eventually abolished and the new covenant was introduced in its place, by means of "progressive revelation." This form of revelation simply means that God chose to reveal to mankind, over a period of time (roughly 1,500 years), His truth in an "evolving" form so that they could understand and accept it, as they matured over the generations. This is similar to what a parent does with their child, changing the discipline, the rules and regulations for that child as they grow older and mature; as Paul says in Hebrews, "But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (Hebrews 5:14).

The abrogation was thus not in the scriptures, but in the covenant contained in the Old Testament. No alteration, corruption or substitution of the Old Testament scriptures by the New Testament has ever taken place. All that has happened is that the old covenant has been replaced by the new covenant, a replacement which the Old Testament itself declared and anticipated (see Ezekiel 36:26-27).

(3) Why should we trust the Bible since it has been corrupted?

A common misconception by Muslims of our Bible stems from the very real and numerous contradictions which are evident between the Bible and the Qur'an (i.e. the accounts of Cain and Abel, Abraham, Solomon and Sheba, Jesus's birth, heaven and hell, etc...). Muslims are equally aware that two supposedly authoritative yet contradictory books cannot both claim to be from God. Therefore, they declare that additions and corruptions have crept into the Bible due to tampering by the Jews and Christians over the years (commonly known as *Tahrif*). While this argument is popularly accepted by many Muslims today, it was not considered by the early compilers of the Islamic Traditions in the 9th and 10th centuries, at least up until the 11th century, when Ibn Hazam, in 1064 AD first suggested that the Bible was corrupted. In fact, few that I have talked with have ever attempted to point out where these corruptions are, or when and how they could have been made. On top of that there simply are too many difficulties maintaining this

position. Consider:

a) The Qur'an gives authority to the Bible:

The Qur'an, itself, the highest authority for all Muslims, gives authority to the Bible, assuming its authenticity at least up to the seventh-ninth centuries.

Consider the following Suras:

Sura Baqara **2:136** points out that there is no difference between the scriptures which preceded and those of the Qur'an, saying, "...the revelation given to us...and Jesus...we make no difference between one and another of them." Sura Al-i-Imran **3:2-3** continues, "Allah...He sent down the Law (of Moses) and the Gospel (of Jesus)...as a guide to mankind." Sura Nisaa **4:136** carries this further by admonishing the Muslims to, "...Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and the scripture which He sent before him."

In Sura Ma-ida **5:47-49,50-52** we find a direct call to Christians to believe in their scriptures: "...We sent Jesus, the son of Mary, confirming the Law that had come before him. We sent him the Gospel... Let the people of the Gospel judge by what Allah hath revealed therein, if any do fail to judge by the light of what Allah hath revealed, they are (no better than) those who rebel..." Again, in Sura Ma-ida **5:68** we find a similar call: "People of the Book!...Stand fast by the law, the Gospel, and all revelation that hath come to you from your Lord. It is the revelation that has come to thee from thy Lord."

To embolden this idea of the New and Old Testament's authority we find in Sura **10:94** that Muslims are advised to confer with these scriptures if in doubt about their own, saying: "If thou wert in doubt as to what We have revealed unto thee, then ask those who have been reading the Book from before thee. The truth had indeed come to thee from thy Lord." And as if to emphasize this point the advice is repeated in Sura **21:7**, stating, "...the apostles We sent were but men, to whom We granted inspiration. If ye realize this not, Ask of those who possess the message."

Finally, in Sura Ankabut **29:46** Muslims are asked not to question the authority of the scriptures of the Christians, saying, "And dispute ye not with the people of the book but say: We believe in the revelation which has come down to us and that which came down to you."

If there is an overlying theme in these Suras which is clear, it is that the Qur'an emphatically endorses the Torah and the Gospel as revelations from God. This coincides with what Christians believe, as well.

Note: There are many Muslims who contend that according to sura 2:140 the Jews and Christians have corrupted their scriptures. This aya says (referring to the Jews and Christians), "...who is more unjust than those who conceal the testimony they have from Allah...?" Nowhere does this aya state that the Jews and Christians corrupted their scriptures. It merely mentions that they have **concealed** "the testimony they have from Allah." In other words the testimony is still there (thus the reason the afore-mentioned suras admonish Muslims to respect the former scriptures), though the adherents of that testimony (in this case, the Jews) have chosen to conceal it.

b) God does not change His Word:

Furthermore, both the Christian scriptures and the Muslim Qur'an hold to the premise that **God does not change His word**. He does not change His revelation (despite the law of abrogation found in the Qur'an: Sura Al Baqarah 2:106). Sura Yunus **10:64** says, "No change can there be in the words of Allah." This is reflected in Sura Al An'am **6:34**: "There is none that can alter the words of Allah," and repeated in Sura Qaf **50:28,29**.

In the scriptures we, likewise, have a number of references which speak of the unchangeability of God's word; such as, Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Isaiah 8:20; Matthew 5:17-18; 24:35; and Revelation 22:18-20.

Why should a Jew or a Christian, before the time of Muhammad, be interested in changing God's revelation? Does he or she want to go to hell? (Revelations 22:18-19). The only conceivable reason for changing a document would be to discredit a competing document. This is what Muslims claim Christians have done.

Left unsaid by Muslims is the puzzling question as to how both the Jews and the Christians would have known simultaneously where and what to change in each of their corresponding scriptures, so that they would be in total agreement with each other, as they have been for the last 2,000 years!

This would indeed be an amazing conspiracy, especially when one considers that the earliest manuscript portions of the Old Testament can be dated to the 2nd century BC (Dead Sea Scrolls), or the fact that there were over 230 New Testament manuscripts (or portions) located throughout the known world before the seventh century when the Qur'an supposedly was revealed. Furthermore, we can point to over 36,000 direct quotations of the New Testament in the early Church fathers letters before the 4th century, as well as 15,000 translations written in thirteen languages, and around 2,000 lectionaries used by the 6th

century churches, all of which would have had to be found and changed without the knowledge of their owners. Even more incredible, the changes and corruptions would have all had to be carried out hundreds of years before the Qur'an was even in existence! How would the Jews and Christians have anticipated what needed to be changed, let alone the fact that changes were even required? That indeed would be a supernatural feat!

One wonders, therefore, why Muslims continue to claim that the Bible is corrupt? "When," we ask, could the Bible have been polluted? "How" could it have been done, and "what" would have been the incentive?

One must also ask why the Qur'an does not clearly state that the Bible was corrupted? Certainly if the Qur'an has divine origins its author/s would have known of the corruptions and would have warned the Muslims of these corruptions. We find no aya which speaks of or warns of such corruptions of the previous scriptures. In fact, since the first Islamic reference to any Biblical corruptions do not even appear until Ibn Hazam mentions it in 1064 AD, suggesting that this argument is a very late 11th century polemic, it intimates that such an accusation was never considered worthy by the earliest compilers of the traditions of the prophet at all.

If Muslims continue to claim that our Scriptures have been corrupted, they have an enormous responsibility to show from what time in history it happened, where these corruptions exist in the text (the task of textual criticism), and why they were never warned of such corruptions by their revelation, the Qur'an, or by their own prophet, Muhammad, or by the later compilers of the prophetic traditions. Indeed, God would never allow his revelations to be manipulated so easily by men; on this both scriptures agree.

(4) Doesn't the Jesus Seminar proves the Bible's corruption?

There are those Muslims who back up their allegations by quoting "Christian scholars" who advocate that much of the existing Gospels had been added to by the disciples of Christ within the first 60 years after his death. A popular example often quoted by the Muslims to back up their accusations, is that of the Jesus Seminar, a group, made up of 74 largely liberal New Testament 'theologians', mostly from Harvard, Claremont, or Vanderbilt divinity schools, organized in 1985 by Robert W. Funk, who have attempted, in the last 15 years to discredit much of the Gospel as we know it (Geisler BECA:386).

Muslims, however, should be careful before quoting from these supposed "Christian scholars," as the presupposition with which these "scholars" work does as much damage to their belief in Jesus Christ as a prophet, a healer and a teacher, as it does to the Christian's belief in Jesus as the Son of God. Muslims would be horrified if the Qur'an was dissected in the same manner by these same liberal scholars.

The Jesus Seminar starts from the premise that if a saying by Jesus could have been uttered by his contemporaries, or is demonstrably in line with later church teaching, it must not have come from him, but was either borrowed from existing individuals or was created by the church. They assume late dates for the New Testament writings, and thereby credit much of its material from 2nd century writings, including the infamous Gnostic 'Gospel of Thomas', which they put alongside the four canonical gospels. With this criteria these "scholars" have excised 82% of Jesus's sayings, and claim that the remaining material is either doubtfully authentic (16%), or can absolutely be regarded as Jesus' actual words (only 15 sayings, or a pitiful 2%) (McDowell 99:563).

And they haven't stopped there. Because of their anti-supernatural bias, they are currently excising all of Jesus's miracles, except for a few 'psychosomatic' healings, since from their humanistic standpoint the supernatural cannot exist, as it cannot be rationally explained or proven. Thus they consider the miracles odious, and so, suspect. What is left are only those saying and acts which a normal, first century Jewish Rabbi would utter. One would hardly recognize him as a prophet, let alone the Son of God.

What the Muslims fail to understand is that this group of scholars is doing much the same thing that many redactionists have been guilty of in the past; namely, they have gone to a particular document with a set of presuppositions, in this case a humanistic or naturalistic outlook, and have interpreted the document using that criteria.

Muslims are guilty of this as well, as I have pointed out earlier. The view that our Bible is corrupt since it contradicts their Qur'an is a good example. The modus operandi in use here is that the Qur'an must be the standard as it supposedly is the more authoritative, due to its 'untouched' and late revelation.

Obviously, we as Christians cannot agree. Not only is the premise wrong, but the conclusions fail to take into consideration the wealth of evidence which supports the veracity for our scriptures.

(5) Isn't the Gospel of Barnabas the real Gospel?

A common misconception which continues to make the rounds today in Muslim circles is that the real Gospel of Jesus is and has been around since the first century. This “gospel” is that of Barnabas, a member of the later body of disciples, and also the companion of Paul.

Muslims like this gospel because it claims Jesus did not die, but was substituted by Judas Iscariot (sect.#217), parallelling the Qur’anic view (Sura 4:157).

But could this be the true gospel which supercedes all the other four gospel accounts? Let’s take a look:

The only manuscript of The Gospel of Barnabas was first discovered in the Papal library around 1590 AD, and the current assumption is that it was written by an Italian between 1400-1500 AD (Geisler 99:67). The first time in which it was quoted was during the Muslim-Christian controversy, by Toland in 1747, and was then called “The Muslim Gospel.” In fact there is no reference to it by any Muslim writer before the 15th or 16th century, which is curious, since Muslims and Christians were in heated debate since the 7th century, and a document such as this would have come in handy in such disputes.

It is quite evident that it is nothing more than a fraudulent invention of the 15th or 16th century, written with the intention of discrediting Jesus and the gospels for the sake of Muhammad and Islam. The shocking ignorance by the author concerning both the gospels and the Qur’an can be seen throughout the account, including serious errors involving first century Palestinian history and geography, and customs and ideas which were not known until a later date, proving that it is not an original document from the time of Christ and his disciples.

Consider these problems in the text:

1) The author calls himself an apostle and inserts himself among the dozen disciples, omitting the name of Thomas from the twelve (#14). He claims the special attention of Jesus towards himself, a testimony of remarkable pride in direct contrast to the humility evidenced by the true evangelists (#s 19,25,72, 83,88,100,101,109,218,219,221).

Ironically, the author has failed to do his homework, for Barnabas was never associated with Jesus during his lifetime. Instead his association was with Paul, after Jesus was no longer among the 12.

2) The author shows his ignorance of the Greek, as well as Hebrew and Aramaic, when Barnabas twice calls Jesus “Chrissto,” yet in #42 and #96 etc. he denies that his Jesus is “the Messiah,” even though “Christ” in Greek is the exact translation of the “Messiah” in Hebrew.

3) It is evident that the author either did not know the account of Jesus' birth well, or that he wrote the account in a hurry: In #3, Joseph, upon arriving in Bethlehem finds no place to rest, so he lodges Mary outside the town, where she delivers Jesus. Yet, in #4 the angel announces to the shepherds that a prophet of the Lord is born in the town of David. The shepherds then go to Bethlehem, and find the infant outside the town, according to the word of the angel. In #6, during the arrival of the wise-men in Jerusalem, Herod asks his scribes where the Christ must be born. They respond: in Bethlehem, as was written by the prophet. Finally, in #7, the wise men arrive in Bethlehem, where they find the star above a hotel outside the town, where Jesus was born. Here we find 5 contradictions within 5 paragraphs!

4) In #10, at the age of 30, on the mountain of olives, in the presence of his mother, according to the author, Jesus receives the gospel from the angel Gabriel (gospel means “the subject of”...Jesus). In #4 the angel announces to the shepherds: “I announce to you a great joy, that is born in the town of David, a prophet.” In Luke 2:10 we find written: “I bring you good news of great joy” (in Greek=euangelion). Neither Barnabas nor Muhammed understood that the gospel is the accomplishment of the coming of the promised Messiah, (see Gal.3:8; 4:4).

5) When a priest asks Jesus if he is the **Messiah** for whom they wait (#42, 48, 96-97), the author has Barnabas respond: “I am not him, because he was before me and will come after me; I am not worthy to undo his shoes; Muhammed is his glorious name!” Thus Barnabas contradicts at the same time John 1:19-29, and the Qur'an 3:33-42 and 5:19, 75, where John, son of Zachariah, is identified as the announcer of the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary (The common title of Jesus used in the Qur'an 3:39,45).

6) In the New Testament, Jesus demonstrated his identity with God by his miracles (Jn.10:30-38); consequently the Pharisees accused him of using the power of Beelzebub, the prince of Demons (Matt.12:24). The author of Barnabas repeats this story (#69) yet recounts that Jesus chased out the demons “by the power and in the name of God, our Lord;” and so the accusation makes little sense.

7) Pretending that Jesus refused to be called God or the Son of God (#70 etc.), the author of Barnabas seeks to explain the origin of this appellation, finally attributing in to the Jews (#93) and also to the Romans (#69,91).

8) Contradictions are a problem for the author. In #33 the only unpardonable sin is idolatry, but in

#69 it is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit.

9) The author of Barnabas inserts some fifteenth century customs in his supposed recitation of the first century.

a) *In #42 and 97 Jesus wears shoes, the kind invented for the cold climates of Italy in the fifteenth century, but unknown in Palestine in the first century.

b) *In #152, the wine-growers cleaned their barrels by rolling them on the ground. But the technology needed for creating wooden barrels did not exist in Palestine during the first century. Instead, wine was stored in earthen vases or goat-skins. The barrel, in fact, was invented quite a bit later (around the 10th cent.), not in Palestine, but in Europe.

c) *In #82, Barnabas writes of a “Jubilee of 100 years” at Jerusalem. In Lev.25:8-34 the Jubilee is depicted for 50 years, and was always kept for that period of time, except for once, in 1343 AD, when the pope Boniface VIII instituted a jubilee of 100 years. This was later returned to the original time allotment of 50 years by Clement VI.

10) The author of Barnabas shows his ignorance of geography and of personalities of Palestine, which he should have known had he lived there, during the time of Christ, which we know the true Barnabas did.

a) *In #20-21, Jesus is shown to traverse the Sea of Galilee where he disembarks at Nazareth, and then walks up to Capernaum. In reality, Nazareth is found in the mountains, more than 25 kilometers from the Sea, and it is Capernaum which is next to the Sea.

b) In #3, Pilate is named as the governor, and Ananias and Caiaphus are named as priests at the birth of Jesus. In fact, Pilate governed from 26-36 years after the birth of Jesus Christ, while Ananias was the chief sacrificer from 7-15 years after the birth of Jesus, but also associated with the priest of his brother-in-law, Caiaphus, from 18-36 years after Jesus.

11) The author of Barnabas seems to know the apocryphal traditions of both Christianity and Islam better than he knows the Bible or the Qur'an.

a) In #35 Muhammad was created 60,000 years before all other things, and in #41 paradise was created for him. Yet, in the Qur'an, Suras: 28:44; 4:162-164; and 38:69-73 we find that Muhammad wasn't at creation, nor was Moses, and he doesn't know what will happen to him.

b) In #106 hell is made up of snow and ice. Compare and contrast this with Matt.25:41, Rev.20:10 in the Bible and Sura 92:14 where hell is of fire.

c) In #11 and 19, Jesus denies that he could heal, saying that he is but a man like all others. He also admits that he cannot create in #95. Compare and contrast these with Sura 5:110; Isaiah 35:4-6; and Luke 7:18-22, where all these abilities are attributed to Jesus.

12) In #52 and 91 Jesus predicts that men who are in the service of Satan would corrupt his gospel. This is in direct contradiction to what the scriptures say: Matt.5:18; and 24:35, and contradicts the Qur'an as well: 4:135-136; 3:2-3; 5:47-51; 18:26-27; and 50:27-29. The Qur'an specifically says that God's word cannot be corrupted.

13) In #217 all the disciples believe that Judas was Jesus at the cross. The author of Barnabas mentions that Jesus had predicted that he would be taken up and that another would die in his place. Thus the disciples concealed him and hid the body of Judas, and went about preaching that Jesus had risen. One needs to ask why the disciples would be willing to give their lives for a belief they knew was false.

One needs to ask how a man, Barnabas, who lived at the time of Christ, who would thus have known the traditions of the time, and would have known the places and peoples, could, yet, fail on so many of these very simple items? Would God have permitted a man to write His gospel with so many glaring errors? You must decide.

(6) Why are there multiple Versions of the Bible?

The question often posed by Muslims is whether the Bible can still be called an accurate Word of God, since it has been “revised” numerous times by men. They stipulate, that since we have corrected our current “versions” they can no longer claim to be authoritative. Take the argument levelled by the popular Islamic apologist and debater Ahmed Deedat at the Revised Standard Version (RSV) Bible today.

Deedat maintains that every time Christians find a problem in the Bible they rewrite it so that it will pass scrutiny. For proof he directs his eager listeners to visit any bookstore and count the many different versions of the Bible which they can find there. He pinpoints the new RSV translation, deriding the authors who in their introduction claim the older KJV translation to be “the noblest monument of English prose,” while then admitting that it has “many and serious grave defects,” suggesting it had to be

rewritten as the re-revised standard version in 1971.

From the outset Muslims should be careful of their contention that there are numerous versions of the Bible in existence today. There is only one Hebrew and one Greek version, though there are many manuscripts in existence, some of which do have slight differences in their scripts. The many versions which the more popular Muslim apologists, such as Ahmed Deedat and others are referring to are merely English translations of the Bible, though they continue to call them "Bible versions."

Every year there are newer translations on the market, each translated with a different intent. For instance, the RSV was written in standard English and is the traditional favourite for many traditional denominations. A newer, modern and increasingly popular English translation is the New International Version (NIV). The New American Standard Bible (NASB), another well-known translation, keeps to the exact meaning of the original text, translating into English word-for-word from the Hebrew and Greek. Consequently, it is difficult to read in English, as Greek and Hebrew grammar do not coincide with English grammar. It is, however, an excellent translation for those who want to study their Bibles seriously.

Conversely, the J.B. Phillips Translation is written in story-book fashion, while the Good News for Modern Man is written with only a 5,000 word vocabulary, to help people who speak English as a second language.

All of these translations are based on copies of the original Hebrew and Greek texts of the Old and New Testaments respectively. The manuscripts have been preserved intact by the Christian Church since a few hundred years before the time of Muhammad (two of the oldest are open to the public free of charge in the British Library, London: The Codex Syniaticus, and Codex Alexandrinus). To claim that these are somehow different editions of the Bible is naive at best, and dishonest at worst.

Interestingly the same criticism can be levelled at their Qur'an. In my library I have three different translations of the Qur'an; one by Yusuf Ali, another by Arberry, and a third by Pickthall. Other popular translations can be ordered from "Islamic Vision" in Birmingham; such as translations written by Mawdudi, Ansari, Asad, Maulana Daryabadi, Khan, and Zidan. Even a simplified version by M.S. Kayari can be bought for the non-native speaker.

Along the same lines Deedat and others show a real ignorance of our scriptures when they make gross statements such as: "*out of over four thousand differing manuscripts the Christians boast about, the church fathers just selected four which tallied with their prejudice and called them the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.*" Even a novice Christian would know that these 4,000 manuscripts are not separate writings from which we could choose what we deemed to be compatible with our theology, but are near identical copies of the 27 books which constitute the New Testament.

(7) Why do some Christians include the Apocrypha, while others don't?

In another common accusation against Christianity, Deedat makes the false charge that we Protestants have "*bravely expunged seven whole books from the Bible,*" referring here to the Apocrypha. Deedat should have been advised to have done some research before condemning the Protestants. These seven books are of Jewish origin, written during the 400 year inter-testamental period (between the books of Malachi and Matthew), and were never considered by the Jews as canonical writings. They abound in historical and geographical inaccuracies, they teach doctrines which are false and are at a variance with inspired Scripture, they display an artificiality of subject matter, and they carry no prophetic power, or poetic and religious feeling. But the overriding reason for not considering them as part of the canon is that they were never intended by their authors to be canonical, and have never been accepted as such by either the Jews, the early Christians fathers, nor the Catholic church before 1546 AD. It was only then that the Catholic Church gave them their canonical status in a polemical action at the Counter Reformation Council of Trent. It is therefore in error to say the Protestants expunged them from their canon. How can something be expunged which had never been there to begin with?

(8) Why are there Variant Readings in the Bible?

Another challenge concerns the variant readings pointed out in many of the newer translations today. Muslims believe these are grave defects which vindicate their claim that our Bible is therefore quite unreliable.

On the contrary. What these variants point out, rather, is an honest attempt by the modern Biblical translators to uphold the integrity of the English translations. The New Testament books were in high demand in the first four centuries after Christ. The printing press had not yet been invented, so the writings had to be copied out by hand and sent to the various churches to be read. In the process there were bound

to be some scribal or copyist accretions.

These “defects,” therefore, are nothing more than a number of variant readings which were generally unknown to the translators who compiled the original King James Version in 1611 AD. The reason for this was that they did not have the earliest manuscripts to refer to in their work.

Today many older manuscripts have been found. In fact we have available 5,300 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, 10,000 Latin Vulgate and at least 9,300 other early versions, providing us with more than 24,000 manuscript copies, or portions of the New Testament from which to use! Obviously this gives us an enormous corpus of texts with which to delineate any variant verses which may exist. Where there is a variant reading, these have been identified and expunged and noted as footnotes on the relevant pages of our modern translations. In no way does this imply any defects with our Bible.

A well-known example of this can be found in 1 John 5:7-8. This verse does not exist in the older manuscripts. It was originally set out as a marginal note in an early text but was mistaken by later transcribers as part of the actual text. Therefore it no longer appears in our newer translations, though a footnote at the bottom of the page copies the verse which existed in later manuscripts, for reference sake.

Ironically, this same accusation can be levelled at the Qur'an. Suffice it to say that there is abundant evidence that when the Qur'an was first collated by the third Caliph Uthman into one standard text, in around 650 AD, there were numerous codices in existence which all contained a host of variant readings (see Bukhari 6:109-110). In some cases there were consonantal variants in certain words, in others the variants concerned whole classes, and here and there words and sentences were found in some codices that were omitted in others. We are told by the later traditions, that there were some fifteen different codices affected by these differences.

Take the example of Sura 2, where there are no less than 149 cases alone within the text of Ibn Mas'ud, the foremost authority on the Qur'an, which differed from the others in circulation, and in particular, differed with the text of Hafsah, the codex supposedly chosen and used as the final model for today's Qur'an.

According to Bukhari, the Caliph Uthman immediately called for the manuscript of the Qur'an which was in the possession of Hafsah, and ordered Zaid-ibn-Thabit and three others to ‘rewrite’ Hafsah’s codex, correcting it wherever necessary. Once this had been done, Uthman then ordered that all the other Qur'anic materials and manuscripts be burned (Sahih al-Bukhari Vol.6:109-110).

Why all the other manuscripts had to be burned is still a mystery. There are those scholars who ask whether it contained “grave defects?” The ashes will never tell.

In comparison, at no time in Christian history has anyone attempted to standardize just one copy of the Bible as the true copy, while attempting to have all the others destroyed.

The Qur'anic text as it is read and printed throughout the Muslim world today is considered to be derived from Zaid's codex, duly corrected where necessary, and later amended by the governor al-Hajjaj. The single text as it stands today was only arrived at through an extended process of amendments, recensions, eliminations and an imposed standardization of a preferred text at the initiative of one caliph, and not by prophetic direction of divine decree.

So even the "Revised Standard Version" of the Qur'an which we now use is anything but perfect. Zaid himself admitted that Sura 33:23 was missing in his version. Furthermore, according to a number of Hadiths, the verses prescribing stoning for adultery (Rajam), which had been recited by Muhammad as part of the Qur'an during his lifetime, remains absent from the current text (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 8:817).

We can only conclude, therefore, that the evidence available completely negates the Muslims illusion that there is no proof that the Qur'an has ever been changed. A. Jeffrey's book, the Materials for the History of the text of the Qur'an contains 362 pages of incontrovertible evidence that the foremost codices during that time differed widely from one another.

Thus, the Qur'an too has suffered from variant readings. The truth is that the textual history of the Qur'an is very similar to that of the Bible. While both have been preserved remarkably well, they have each suffered from variant readings, and textual defect. Yet neither have been corrupted, so that each is, in its basic structure and content, a fair record of what was originally there.

The only difference between the two is that whereas the variant readings which are identified in the Bible begin to appear quite late (sometime after the 4th century), pointing to an early authoritative canonical text, the variant reading in the Qur'an appear almost immediately, pointing to a manipulation and evolution to a later canonical form, sometime in the 8th century. Furthermore, the Christian Church has, in the interests of truth, carefully preserved the later variant readings that exist in the Biblical text for all to see, whereas the Muslims at the time of Uthman, or later, deemed it expedient to destroy all evidences of

different readings of the Qur'an. That fact alone seems to underline which camp, indeed, has more to answer for concerning variant readings of their scriptures.

(9) Doesn't the Bible have 50,000 Errors?

There are certain Muslims who quote the Jehovah Witnesses claim that the Bible has 50,000 errors, taking as established fact any charge they read against the Bible without the slightest effort to verify it.

Deedat makes this claim as well, and uses only 4 examples to substantiate the claim. Since many people use Deedat's material when they debate Christians it might be helpful here to go through them briefly:

1) The change by the RSV from using the word "virgin" (*bethulah*) to "young woman" (*almah*) in Isaiah 7:14 is Deedat's first example. This is not an error, but merely an issue of translation and interpretation. "Young woman" is a literal rendering of the word, though it always means an unmarried young woman. That is why some versions use the word "virgin," which helps put the meaning in its context.

2) The change of the word in the RSV of John 3:16 from "begotten Son" to "only Son" as his second example is much the same issue. The original Greek word means "unique." Either way there is no difference between "only" and "begotten."

Interestingly, the translators of the Qur'an do much the same in their translation of Sura 19:88, where Yusuf Ali uses the word "begotten," while Pickthall, Muhammad Ali and Maulana Daryabadi use the word "taken." Is Deedat ready to say that the Qur'an too has errors on this point?

3) Deedat's third example, where the RSV corrects the 1 John 5:7 variant passage has already been dealt with earlier. Deedat naively continues that it is only this verse which supports the doctrine of the trinity. He would do well to read Matthew 28:19 and others which support this doctrine quite well.

4) Deedat's final example is rather odd, as he claims that none of the authors of the canonical Gospels recorded a single word about the ascension of Jesus. Yet, all four knew of it. John makes 11 references to it, Luke writes about it specifically in Acts 1:9, and both Matthew and Mark regularly speak of the second coming of Jesus from heaven. One wonders how Jesus could come from heaven if he had not first ascended there in the first place.

Deedat concludes with what he believes are two instances of tampering of the Biblical text: the Mark 16:9-20 and the John 8:1-11 passages. Most modern translations keep these passages in the text with an explanatory note stating that in some of the oldest manuscripts these verses do not appear.

The problem is that in other old manuscripts these passages do appear. Thus the translators are by no means tampering with the text but are merely bringing our English translations as close as possible to the original text.

These then are the only examples of the 50,000 errors which he quotes from the J.W.'s. Obviously he has an enormous task to come up with the supposed 49,996 other errors; a task I indeed wouldn't envy.

(10) Isn't the Bible full of Contradictions (or Numerical Errors)?

Muslims enjoy pointing out a number of numerical discrepancies in the Old Testament which they believe weaken the authority for the Bible since God would not allow such glaring contradictions within His Word. Some put the number as high as 50,000, yet no-one has entertained the notion to point out where such a vast number of errors exist, since to do so would involve nearly every verse in the Bible!

Over the past century a list of popular Biblical contradictions have been tabulated by scores of critics, almost all of which have been answered in a number of well known publications, such as: Gleason Archer's Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties (1994), John Haley's Alleged Discrepancies of the Bible, Josh McDowell's Christianity: A Ready Defence, (1990), or the two volumes published by 'Light of Life' The True Guidance, Part Two, ('False Charges against the Old Testament'), (1992), and The True Guidance, Part Three, ('False Charges against the New Testament'), (1992). A further 101 supposed contradictions tabulated by the Muslim apologist, Shabir Ally, have been answered by those of us here working here in London in a paper entitled '101 Cleared up Contradictions', which is available on the internet at: <<http://debate.org.uk/topics/apolog/contrads.htm>>

Upon closer scrutiny, much of what Muslims claim to be errors are nothing more than copyist mistakes. Let me explain. It is quite clear that the books of the Old Testament were written in the fifth century BC on the only writing material available at that time, pieces of Papyrus, which decayed rather quickly, and so needed continual copying. We know that much of the Old Testament was copied by hand

for over 2,300 years, while the New Testament was copied for between 100-300 years, in isolated communities situated in different lands and on different continents, yet they still remain basically unchanged.

Today many archaic manuscripts have been found which we can use to corroborate the earlier manuscripts. In fact we have an enormous collection of manuscripts available. Concerning the New Testament manuscripts (MSS) we have 5,300 Greek MSS, 10,000 Latin Vulgate MSS and at least 9,300 other early versions. In all we now have more than 24,000 manuscript copies or portions of the New Testament from which to use, around 350 of which date from before the sixth century alone! Obviously this gives us much more material with which to delineate any variant verses which may exist. Where there is a variant reading, these have been identified and expunged and noted as footnotes on the relevant pages of our current texts. In no way does this imply any defects with our Bible.

Christians readily admit that there have been copyist errors or accretions in the copies of the Old and New Testament. It is beyond the capability of anyone to avoid any and every slip of the pen in copying page after page from any book, sacred or secular. Yet we may be sure that the original manuscript of each book of the Bible, being directly inspired by God, was free from all error. Those originals, however, no longer exist.

The individuals who did the copying (copyists) were prone to making two types of scribal errors. One concerned the spelling of proper names (especially unfamiliar proper names), and the other had to do with numbers. The fact that it is mostly these types of error in evidence gives credence to the argument for copyist accretions. If indeed the originals were in contradiction, we would see evidence of this within the content of the stories themselves. (Archer 1982:221-222)

What is important to remember, however, is that no well-attested variation in the manuscript copies that have come down to us alter any single doctrine of the Bible. To this extent, at least, the Holy Spirit has exercised a restraining influence in superintending the transmission of the text. Let's take a look at three examples to better understand what we are saying.

II Kings 24:8 vs. II Chronicles 36:9 (King Jehoiachin's age: 18 or 8)

II Samuel 10:18 vs. I Chronicles 19:18 (men of 700 chariots or 7,000 men)

II Chronicles 9:25 vs. I Kings 4:26 (4,000 stalls or 40,000 stalls)

There are many more examples which we could use, but these three are well representative of the problem which exists. The errors in these examples all have to do with the decade in the number given.

Take the first example concerning the king Jehoiachin, whose age at accession is given in II Kings as 18, and later in II Chronicles as 8. There is enough information in the context of these two passages to tell us that 8 is wrong and 18 right. The age of 8 is unusually young to assume governmental leadership.

As we mentioned, in each case it is the decade number that varies. It is instructive to observe that the number notations used by the Jewish settlers in the 5th century BC, Elephantine Papyri, during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah (fortunately we have a large file of documents in papyrus from this source), consisted of a horizontal stroke ending in a downward hook at its right end to represent the numbers in tens (thus two horizontal strokes one above the other would be 20). Vertical strokes were used to represent anything less than ten. Thus eight would be /III IIII, but eighteen would be /III IIII with the addition of a horizontal line and downward hook above it. Similarly twenty-two would be /I followed by two horizontal hooks, and forty-two would be /I followed by two sets of horizontal hooks (please forgive the deficiencies of my computer; it is not the scholar Dr. Archer is).

If, then, the primary manuscript from which a copy was being carried out was blurred or smudged, one or more of the decadal notations could be missed by the copyist. It is far less likely that the copyist would have mistakenly seen an extra ten stroke that was not present in his original than that he would have failed to observe one that had been smudged.

In the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible, the corrections have been included in the texts. However, for clarity, footnotes at the bottom of the page mention that earlier Hebrew MSS include the scribal error, while the Septuagint MSS and Syriac as well as one Hebrew MSS include the correct numerals. It only makes sense to correct the numerals once the scribal error has been noted. This, however, in no way negates the authenticity nor the authority of the scriptures which we have (Archer 1982:206-207, 214-215; Nehls pg.17-18).

(11) How could certain authors in the Bible write about themselves in the third person?

A common accusation by Muslims at 'Speaker's Corner', in London is the contention that certain writers of the Bible could not have written the books which have been ascribed to them. Moses could not

have written the five books of Moses because they contained statements such as "The Lord said unto Moses..." Furthermore, they contend that since one can find the obituary of Moses in the 34th chapter of Deuteronomy it must have been written by someone else.

Matthew, they believe, could not have written Matthew because Matthew describes himself in the third person.

Why an author cannot describe himself in the third person is not only simplistic but ludicrous, especially in light of the fact that Allah does the same for himself in the Qur'an, Sura 5:110, where we find written, "*When Allah saith, O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favour unto thee.*" I see no difference between a saying where the Lord spoke to Moses (the claimed author of the Pentateuch) in the Bible, and where Allah (the claimed author of the Qur'an) spoke to Jesus in the Qur'an. Allah is alleged to be the author of the Qur'an by Muslims, yet he is described in it on numerous occasions in the third person.

As for the obituary of Moses. It should be quite obvious to anyone reading chapter 34 of Deuteronomy that this was written by Moses's successor Joshua, who also wrote the book which immediately follows it. It has only been added to Deuteronomy as a conclusion to the amazing story of Moses which we find in Deuteronomy and the other four books of Moses.

(12) By knowing the source of a book do we not invalidate its authority?

Another similar point of contention for Muslims follows that Matthew was not the real author of the book of Matthew since he cribbed his book by copying his material from Mark. Matthew, as any good Bible scholar will tell you, did better than that; his and Mark's real source was Peter, a person who had far more first-hand information about the life of Jesus than Matthew or Mark, since Peter was with Jesus more often than the other disciples.

This argument could have held water had the source been extra-Biblical, from outside the Gospels, but it isn't, and Matthew could hardly have found a more reliable source for his Gospel than that of Peter.

Ironically, it is this very accusation against the sources for the Qur'an which has proved so damaging to the authority for the Qur'an. We don't have the time or space to cover this very real problem here.

Suffice it to say, however, that entire passages and stories in the Qur'an which are set forth as historically true, have almost identical parallels with pre-Islamic Jewish and Christian books of fables and fairy-tales.

For instance: the murder of Abel by Cain, and the Raven sent by Allah to show him how to hide his brother's naked corpse, as well as an almost redemptive analysis of this act in Sura 5:27-32, parallels a similar account written by Pirke Rabbi Eliezer (chapter 21), a 2nd century Jewish document, the Targum of Jonathan-ben-Uzziah, and the Mishnah Sanhedrin 4:5. The story of Abraham destroying the idols and being thrown into a fire, only to be rescued by Allah in Sura 21:51-71 follows the Midrash Rabah, which incorporates the musings on the word 'UR' to signify fire by the scribe Jonathan Ben Uziel. The delightful story of Solomon, the Hoopoo bird and the Queen of Sheba found in Sura 27:17-44, is almost word for word identical to the 2nd century apocryphal writing entitled the II Targum of Esther.

For those who are interested in pursuing this further, both Gerhard Nehl's Christians ask Muslims and St. Clair Tisdall's, The Sources of Islam (1904), go into this area in great detail. What we must say here is that instead of trying to make capital out of the passages in the Bible which have parallels elsewhere in the Bible, Muslims should rather give us an alternative explanation as to why Qur'anic passages are embarrassingly similar to and patently reliant on Jewish and Christian books of fables and folklore written in an around the 2nd - 4th centuries AD?

(13) How can a book which includes Pornography be accepted as God's Word?

A growing number of Muslims take the position that the Bible can not be the Word of God because it contains stories which are pornographic; stories such as Judah's incest with Tamar (Genesis 38) or Lot's incest with his daughters. Deedat used this argument to good effect in his public debate with Annis Shorosh in Birmingham in 1988.

What this argument fails to comprehend is the intent of the Word of God. These sins which are referred to are not sins of God but those of men, even the best of men. Nowhere in these stories is the character of God brought into reproach. Instead these episodes unreservedly expose the sins of humanity for what they are and refuse to cover up the excesses of even the best of them. The Bible is concerned about the praise of God, and not the praise of men. It is the glory of God that the Bible speaks about-not the vainglory of men, and for this reason it can claim to be God's Word.

Often, when Muslims forward this accusation, they fail to mention the story of David's sin with Bathsheba (in 2 Samuel 11), a sin which is a far greater wickedness than the others usually offered, as David not only lusts after Bathsheba, and then commits adultery with her, but then has Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, killed so that he can take her for his wife.

Why is this story conveniently omitted? Possibly because the Qur'an refers to it as well, in Sura 38:25-26, where David bows down to ask forgiveness for this very sin, though the sin itself is not spelled out. The fact that the Qur'an upholds this supposedly pornographic Biblical story shows that there can be no genuine objection to similar stories where the misdemeanours of other prophets are set out in the Bible.

What Muslims have not realized is that their argument points to a chasm of understanding between Christianity and Islam, a theological belief that is the very core of the Gospel message. By revealing these deficiencies of humanity, the Bible teaches us that all people are sinful, even the best of men, and that their sins incur damning consequences, which therefore needs forgiveness. If the Bible omitted the sinfulness of God's own prophets, it would then suggest that there was a two-tiered righteousness which existed in humanity, that somehow the prophets were on a different level than the rest of us, that they didn't deal with the same problems as those to whom they were sent to help.

This is wrong, and exposes an inherent weakness in Islamic theology, that is, its total inability to even acknowledge, let alone answer the very real problem of universal sin in all of humanity, prophet and laymen alike.

(14) How can a book which includes bad actions of men be accepted as God's Word?

Along the same lines, Muslims contend that the Word of God must not contain any bad language. The Old Testament from which Muslims obtain their examples constitutes the written history of the Jews. It is well known that historians of any country endeavour to record history in such a way that their country and its people are glorified. As a result, historical records of identical events may contain vast variations from country to country according to their bias. In the frank recording of the shameful sins of Israel in the Old Testament we see an obvious sign that nobody tried to "improve" the image of the Jews. This weighs heavily in favour of the integrity and truthfulness of the Biblical record. We see in the recording of these atrocities a sign of the trustworthiness of the Bible.

Therefore, to say, as Muslims have done, that the Bible treats the Jews with disrespect because it uses strong language, misses the point. The harsh language is reserved for those who are in sin, whoever they may be. The language for the sin of the Jews is perhaps strong because the Bible takes sin to be a very serious offence against God (refer to Mark 7:20-23 and Galatians 5:19 for a list of sins).

The Bible does not condone the act of sin, nor does it offer any praise for dirty actions, but proclaims rather the impending judgement of God (see II Samuel 11:26; 27-12:1-19). Throughout the Bible God is shown to be absolutely holy, perfectly righteous, and wonderfully loving. If it unreservedly exposes the sins of men for what they are and refuses to cover up the excesses of even the best of them, there is surely a very fair claim that it is God's Word, for it is concerned about the praise of God and not the praise of men.

Essentially, sin in the Bible is all that which is not like God, all that which is not holy and therefore, that which is unclean. We all stand accused. Not just the Jews, but every human being. Thus we are not surprised when the Bible addresses us as rebellious people (Deuteronomy 9:7), or adulterous (referring to the fact that we have other gods in our life, money, pleasures, jobs, instead of putting God first).

Muslims contend that as a contrast the Qur'an is courteous and respectful to the Jews. Yet, the Qur'an condemns the Jews as well. It may be helpful to refer to **Sura 5:57**, which reads, "*O believers, take not Jews and Christians as friends; they are friends of each other. Whoso of you makes them his friends is one of them. God guides not the people of the evildoers.*" That is followed by **Sura 5:85**, which reads, "*Thou wilt surely find the most hostile of men to the believers are the Jews and the idolaters*" (Arberry's translation).

(15) How can a book which includes bad language be accepted as God's Word?

A popular objection by Muslims is the disturbing and disrespectful language which the Bible contains. There are two ways we can tackle this problem.

First of all, Christians accept that the Bible, indeed, uses human language to communicate God's revelation to humanity. We do not hold to the Qur'anic principle of 'tanzil' (sent down, unfettered by human intermediaries) for our scriptures. Therefore, the Bible certainly exemplifies a variety of styles in writing, as it was written by a variety of individuals. At times it records the words of the people spoken in

a particular situation. An example is the quote in 2 Kings 18:27 or Isaiah 36:12, of the former Assyrian (Iraqi) general speaking crudely to the children of Israel.

The words were either written in Hebrew or Aramaic in the original writings. The words Muslims are offended by are merely English translations of these words. We must remember that there is rarely a one-to-one word equivalent when translating from one language to another. The translator is forced to choose the nearest word in keeping with the context of the passage. Conversely, there may be two or three words in the translators language for the one found in Hebrew.

Take for instance the example of the Hebrew word *mamzer* in Zechariah 9:6. This can be translated as a child of unlawful union, or one who is illegitimate, or a child of mixed parentage (a child from a believing or Israelite parent married to an unbeliever or non-Israelite). It can also be translated as a mongrel, or a bastard (the word taken from French which came into English usage in the 16th century). A translator has the right to choose one word or the other, depending on which he considers to be the most applicable. The NIV uses the word "foreigner," the Revised Standard Version, and the NASB use the word "Mongrel." "Bastard" is a perfectly legitimate usage for the context, however.

Interestingly, the word "Bastard" was not considered a curse word until quite recently, and would not have raised eyebrows at that time, as it does today. Since languages evolve, translations, therefore, must evolve with them. This may be the reason the NIV and NASB have chosen "foreigner," and "mongrel."

As I looked up the references which Muslims found offensive, I came across just this sort of evolution. In the more current NIV translation I found that instead of the word "bastard," they used "person of forbidden marriage" (Deut.23:2), and "illegitimate" (Hebrews 12:8). For "shit," they chose "own filth" (2 Kings 18:27), and instead of "piss," they chose "urine" (Isaiah 36:12). I do not find these choices offensive, and I trust they meet with the Muslims approval as well.

A second answer to this problem concerning the use of bad language points to a real chasm of understanding between Christianity and Islam, a theological belief that is the very core of our Gospel message: that we are all sinners and in need of redeeming that sin.

This exposes an inherent weakness in Islamic theology, that is, its total inability to even acknowledge, let alone answer the very real problem of universal sin in all of humanity.

(16) How could the ancestry of Jesus, one of the greatest prophets, include sinners?

An often voiced criticism by Muslims, is the abhorrence that one of the greatest prophets respected by both Christians and Jews would have sinful ancestors. They point to the ancestry of Jesus found in the Gospel of Matthew to make their case. Muslim apologists deride this account as it contains "adulterers and offspring of incest," since it refers to four women who had moral or ethnic defects:

Tamar committed incest with Judah

Rahab was a prostitute and a gentile

Ruth was also a gentile, not of the chosen race of Abraham

Bathsheba was an adulteress

Matthew included these four, and not others such as Sarah and Rebecca (though they also were Jesus's ancestors), because it was precisely for people such as Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and Bathsheba that Jesus came into the world to save.

For many Muslims these stories represent a cancer which must not infect and pervert the Word of God, much as they believe dirty words will do. For Christians these women take on a much wider appeal, because they represent every one of us. The fact that God has chosen the gentile, the prostitute, and the adulterer, those who are in sin, to be a part of the line of His final revelation to humanity, Jesus Christ, speaks volumes, as it gives all of us hope to also belong to that line.

This fact not only reveals the universality of sin in the world, it, as well, reveals the universality of God's salvific work. We, in our sinfulness can and do claim the blood of Christ, which allows even the greatest sinner an immediate assurance of salvation; a claim no Muslim dare make. I can, therefore, understand why they feel threatened not only by the tone of our scriptures, but by the enormous depth of its message, a message which no other book or prophet has ever attempted to preach. It is for that reason these accusations have been levelled and will continue to be levelled. We need have no fear, however, for the message of the Bible itself is its own best defence. For where sins abound, and are revealed for what they are, there the truth of God's revealed Word will set it free.

CONCLUSION: THE BIBLE IS TRUSTWORTHY:

What, then, can we say concerning these misconceptions of our Bible? From what we know there is no doubt that our Bible has been transmitted to us accurately so that what we have is the exact representation of what God said and did. Not only will the Jews corroborate the proof for its accuracy, but documents such as the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls give added weight to the claim that it has never been changed.

Even the Qur'an, written during the 7th-9th centuries recognized the authority of our scriptures. We also know that, outside of a few scribal errors, the historical events and personages are adequately correct, as they do not confuse names, dates and events, and in fact, surprisingly, continue to coincide with current archaeological findings. While Muslim scholars continue to borrow fraudulent data from secular sources to attack the validity of the Bible (material from the Jesus Seminar), or even fabricate documents of their own (The Gospel of Barnabas), once these documents are scrutinized they lay bare the false premise from which they are foisted, and do little to dent the formidable authenticity which the Bible can and does claim for itself. For these reasons we can rest assured in the authority for our scriptures, with the hope that Muslims, in time, will also see the error in their perceptions and look again at that which they have so easily discarded.

Furthermore, a document, to be considered to have come from an all-knowing God, must meet certain criteria: **First**, it must have been transmitted to us accurately so that what we have is the exact representation of what God said and did. **Secondly** historical events and personages must be correct. A book from God cannot confuse names, dates and events. **Thirdly**, any book from God should not contain any scientific absurdities (outside of miracles) which would give away its human authorship.

The Bible does this and much more. There is more evidence for the reliability of the text of the New Testament than there is for any ten pieces of classical literature put together. It is also in better textual shape than the 37 plays of William Shakespeare which were written just 300 years ago, after the invention of printing.

“With the abundance of existing manuscripts (handwritten copies) of the New Testament (more than 24,000, with 230 compiled before the 7th century), we know nothing has been lost through the transmission of the text.” As far as we can know, the names, places, and events mentioned in the Bible have been recorded accurately. With each successive year, ongoing archaeological discoveries fail to divulge any contradictions. Instead they continue to corroborate what the Bible has been saying for 2,000 years (examples such as the *Ebla* tablets, or the newly discovered tomb of the priest *Caiaphus* give continuing credibility to the scriptures trustworthiness).

The testimony of the historical evidence is that the Bible can be trusted as an accurate document. When the Bible speaks on scientific matters it does so with correct and simple terms, devoid of absurdities; though one would not expect such from a book written by men during pre-scientific times. Instead of the usual flights of imagination found in other documents of that era, the Bible shows restraint, such as the quite scientifically accurate account of creation, or the specific dimensions given for the ark, making it seaworthy for a ship of its size and requirements.

We must also know that the Bible is unique? Consider: Here is a book written over a 1,500 year span (about 40 generations), by more than 40 authors, among whose number were found: kings, peasants, philosophers, fishermen, poets, statesmen, scholars, a herdsman, a general, a cupbearer, a doctor, a tax collector, and a rabbi. It was written on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe, and in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Its subject matter includes hundreds of controversial topics, yet from Genesis right on through to Revelation the authors all spoke with harmony and continuity on the theme of the unfolding story of “God's redemption of humanity.”

While the seeming contradictions and revisions exemplified turn out to be nothing more than numerical copying accretions within the manuscripts, we can clearly state that from what we know there is no doubt that our Bible has been transmitted to us accurately so that what we have is the exact representation of what God said and did. Not only will the Jews corroborate the proof for its accuracy, but documents such as the “Septuagint” and the “Dead Sea Scrolls” give added weight to the claim that it has never been changed.

Even the Qur'an, written during the seventh to ninth centuries recognized the authority of our scriptures. We also know that, outside of the few scribal errors, the historical events and personages are adequately correct, as they do not confuse names, dates and events, and in fact, surprisingly, continue to coincide with current archaeological findings.

The accusations against revising our scriptures turn out to be nothing more than a misunderstanding by Muslims of an honest attempt by Christians to correct current translations so that they correspond to older and, thus more authoritative manuscripts which we now have in our possession.

If God truly created the world for His pleasure, He would have created it to work to a pattern. This pattern we would expect to find revealed in His Word; as indeed we do, not only in the life of Jesus, the Word, who came and dwelt amongst us, but in the truth of the Gospel which was found in His teaching and later written down by His apostles.

And finally, our Bible not only stands 'heads and shoulders' above any books of antiquities in its depth of understanding and wisdom, while at the same time containing no scientific absurdities which would give away its human authorship, it refuses to whitewash away the sins of even its closest adherents, admitting the universality of sin in the world while revealing, likewise, the universality of Jesus's salvific work. Only the Bible offers even the greatest sinner an immediate and eternal assurance of salvation.

It should not surprise us that the Bible continues to be the source of God's revelation to His creation, for families and communities around the world, and that, according to the latest statistics, the Bible is uncontested as the most popular book ever written, and is read by more people and published in more languages than any other book in history, so that today "one copy is published every three seconds day and night; or 22 copies every minute day and night; or 1,369 copies every hour day and night; and 32,876 copies every day in the year, and so on..."

It is logical, then, that Christianity, because it holds the repository of Biblical principles and thinking, is the fastest conversion-growing religion in the world today. What better testimony could one ask to demonstrate the Bible's claim to be the truly revealed and inspired Word of God.

Bibliography

Aland, Kurt & Barbara, The Text of the New Testament, trans. by Errol Rhodes, Eerdmans, 1987, pp. 72-166

Archer, G., Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties, Grand Rapids, Zondervan Publ. hse., 1982

Bruce, F.F., The New Testament Documents, William B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., Grand Rapids, 1943 (0-8028-1025-X)

Campbell, Dr. William, The Qur'an and the Bible in the Light of History and Science, Middle East Resources

Cook, Michael, Muhammad, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1983

Copleston, F.S., Christ or Mohammed? The Bible or the Koran?, Harpenden, Nuprint, 1989

Crone, Patricia, Slaves on Horses, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980

Feinburg, C.L., The New Bible Dictionary (2nd ed.), Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1993

Geisler, Norman, Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1999

Gilchrist, John, Jam' Al-Qur'an. The Codification of the Qur'an Text, S. Africa, Jesus to the Muslims, 1989

Hjarpe, Jan, "The Contemporary Debate in the Muslim World on the definition of 'Human Rights'", in K.

Ferdinand & M. Mozaffari (eds.), Islam: State and Society, 1988

Jeffrey, Grant, R., The Signature of God, Toronto, Frontier Research Publ., 1996
(0-921714-28-9)

Johnstone, P., Operation World, Gerrards Cross, WEC International, 1993

Kidron, Michael & Segal, Ronald, The New State of the World Atlas, 4th edition, London, Simon & Schuster, 1991

Kitchen, K.A., "Canaan," The New Bible Dictionary (2nd Ed.), Leicester, Inter-Varsity Press, 1993

- McClintock, John, & Strong, James, Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature, Grand Rapids, Baker, 1981
- McDowell, Josh, Christianity: A Ready Defence, Harpendon, Scripture Press Foundation, 1990
- McDowell, Josh, Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Vols.I & II, Harpendon, Scripture Press Foundation, 1972 (vol.1) 1975 (vol.2)
The New Evidence that Demands a Verdict, vol.1&2, Thomas Nelson Publ., Nashville, 1999
- Muir, William, The Apology of al-Kindi, written at the Court of al-Mamun (830 AD) in Defense of Christianity against Islam, London, Smith, elder & Co., 1882
- Nehls, Gerhard, Christians Ask Muslims, Bellville, SIM International/Life Challenge, 1987
- Neuman and Eckelmann, Genesis One and the Origin of the Earth, Downers Grove, Ill., Intervarsity Press, 1977
- Newsline, November/December 1993, pgs.24-36B
- Pfander, C. G., The Mizanu'l Haqq, (Balance of Truth), London, The Religious Tract Soc., 1835 & 1910
- Reinach, Salomon, Orpheus: A History of Religion, New York, Liveright, Inc. 1932
- Robinson, John A.T., Redating the New Testament, London, SCM Press, 1976
- Scher, A. (ed. & tr.), Histoire Nestorienne, part two, in *Patrologia Orientalis*, vol.xiii, 1906
- Suetonius, The Twelve Caesars, trans. Robert Graves, London, The Penguin Group, 1989
- Thompson, Thomas L., The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: the Quest for the Historical Abraham, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1974
- VanderKam, James C., The Dead Sea Scrolls Today, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994
- Wright, W., Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in the British Museum, London, 1870