

APOLOGETICS
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Introduction

Does God exist? Is Jesus an historical person? Did Jesus die on a cross and rise from the dead? Is Jesus the only way to God? Is the Bible reliable? Christians are told to be ready to give answers to these types of questions to those who want to know why we believe in Jesus, and why we have hope in Him (I Peter 3:15). We defend the Christian Faith by presenting positive evidence and reasons why we believe. This is the essence of apologetics.

I. Understanding “Apologetics”

A. Origin of the word “Apologetics”

The term *apologetics* etymologically derives from the Classical Greek word *apologia*. In the Classical Greek legal system two key technical terms were employed: the prosecution delivered the *kategoria* (κατηγορία), and the defendant replied with an *apologia*. To deliver an *apologia* then meant making a formal speech to reply and rebut the charges, as in the case of Socrates' defense.

B. Use of term “Apologetics” in the New Testament

1. The noun *apologia* (απολογία) used 8 times in N.T.

1. Acts 22:1 “hear my defense which I now offer to you”
2. Acts 25:6 “opportunity to make a defense”
3. I Cor. 9:3 “My defense to those who examine me is this”
4. II Cor. 7:11 “what defense [vindication] of yourselves”
5. Philip. 1:7 “in the defense and confirmation of the gospel”
6. Philip. 1:16 “knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel”
7. II Tim 4:16 “no one defended me”
8. I Peter 3:15 “always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you”

2. The verb *apologeomai* (απολογηομαι) used 10 times in N.T.

- Luke 12:11 “do not become anxious about how or what you should speak in your defense.”
- Luke 21:14 “make up your minds not to prepare beforehand to defend yourselves.”
- Acts 19:33 “Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly.”
- Acts 24:10 “I cheerfully make my defense.” (Paul before governor Felix)
- Acts 25:8 “Paul said in his own defense . . .” (before Portius Festus, the new governor who succeeded Felix).
- Acts 26:1 “Paul stretched out his hand and proceeded to make his defense.” (before King Agrippa)
- Acts 26:2 “I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am about to make my defense before you today.”
- Acts 26:24: “While Paul was saying this in his defense....”
- Romans 2:15 “. . . their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.”
- II Cor. 12:19 “All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you.”

3. Other words and concepts relating to “defending the faith”

a. **Philippians 1:7**

“in the defense and confirmation of the gospel” (“confirmation” from verb *bebaioo* [βεβαιωω] “confirm, verify, prove to be true”)

b. **Jude 3**

“contend earnestly for the faith”--“contend” is *epagonizomai* (επαγωνιζομαι) “struggle in behalf of” (apologetics takes effort)

c. **Jude 22**

“have mercy on some who are doubting” (the proper attitude when defending the faith) (rather than condemning people who have questions and doubts, we should show kindness)

d. **Titus 1:9-11**

“that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (Church leaders are to teach sound doctrine and refute those who disagree)

“exhort” *parakaleo* [παρακαλεω] and “refute” *antilego* [αντιλεγω--] “oppose, contradict, resist”] are two qualifications of church leaders

e. **II Tim. 2:24-25**

“not quarrelsome . . . with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth” (love and patience are necessary)

“quarrelsome” *makomai* [μαχομαι--] “to fight, dispute”]; instead be like Jesus—a soft hand of correction (“gentleness” *prautes* [πραυτης--] “meekness”]

C. Types of Christian Apologetics

1. Evidential apologetics (historical and legal evidentialism)

a. **reliability of the Bible**

The Bible is the starting point (from it we get our knowledge of what Jesus said and did, and what His followers said and did, and why they followed Him to their deaths)

b. **historicity of Jesus**

Both inside and outside of the Bible, the historical record that confirms He was a real Person who lived, died and rose from the dead in time and space (not metaphysical)

c. **prophetic fulfillment**

The Bible itself sets forth the argument that being able to foretell the future is a sign of divine involvement (and anyone who presumes to speak for God must be 100% accurate—or must be stoned—Deut. 18:20) (Is. 48:3-5 says “I declared the former things long ago...before they took place I proclaimed them to you.”)

d. miracles

supernatural events—“miracles”—attest to the truthfulness of the Christian message (Jesus used them to prove that He had spiritual authority—Mt. 9:1-8)

2. philosophical apologetics

limitations—proving God may help, but even if we prove God’s existence to a skeptic/agnostic, we are no closer to proving the God that exists is the God of the Bible, and that Jesus is the Savior, than when we started. (however, see the Apostle Paul’s argument in Acts chapter 17 on Mars Hill, especially Acts 17:34)

a. Cosmological Argument

Argues that the existence of the universe demonstrates that God exists. Various related arguments from science are often offered to support the cosmological argument

b. Teleological Argument (argument from design)

Argues that there is an intricate design in the world around us, and a design requires a designer. Cicero, William Paley, and Michael Behe employ this argument (“watchmaker” argument)

c. Ontological Argument

Argues that the very concept of God demands that there is an actual existent God.

d. Moral Argument

Argues that if there are any real morals, then there must be an absolute from which they are derived. Austrian philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* said “ethics is transcendental,” i.e., ethics must come from beyond our human predicament (or else ethics is relative, and perhaps even arbitrary).

e. Transcendental Argument

Argues that all our abilities to think and reason require the existence of God.

f. Presuppositional Arguments

Arguments that show basic beliefs of theists and non-theists require God as a necessary precondition.

g. Practical Benefit Argument—Pascal’s Wager

Blaise Pascal (17th c. Catholic philosopher and mathematician) begins with the premise that the existence or non-existence of God is not provable by human reason, since the essence of God is “infinitely incomprehensible.” Since reason cannot decide the question, one must “wager,” either by guessing or making a leap of faith. Therefore, it is wise to live as though God exists, because if God exists, you go to heaven: your gain is infinite. If God does not exist, you gain nothing and lose nothing.

C. S. Lewis: “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, is of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

3. presuppositionalism (an objection to evidential apologetics) (discussed in sec. IV)

two main approaches to apologetics :

- (1) evidential/empirical/classical approach (historically used by Christians) (20th c. Benjamin Warfield, inductive)
- (2) presuppositional approach (deductive) (Cornelius Van Til, Greg Bahnsen, Vern Poythress, John Frame)

D. History of Christian Apologetics

1. New Testament apologetics

a. appealing to the evidence

(1) I Cor. 15:3-8

(historical facts—Christ’s death, burial and resurrection; and appearances of the resurrected Christ)

(2) Mt. 9:2-8

(it is easier to say “your sins are forgiven?” Why? No way to verify if anything happens (no way to prove or disprove). But healing a lame man *is* visible proof of miraculous power (power in the physical realm to perform miracles is a good argument that the person has power in the spiritual realm, too)

(3) Acts 17:2-3

Paul “reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead....”

b. appealing to apostles’ eyewitness accounts and personal experience

(1) II Pet. 1:16

“We did not follow cleverly devised fables (*mythoi*)” (even during the New Testament era, the quality of the evidence was important)

(2) I John 1:1-3

“What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled... and we have seen and bear witness...what we have seen and heard we proclaim”

(3) John 20:25-28

“Thomas said, ‘unless I see in his hands the nail prints and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.’” Jesus told Thomas to “reach here your finger, and see my hands’ reach here and put your hand into my side; and be not unbelieving but believing.” Thomas said, “my Lord and my God.”

c. appealing to the hearer’s common knowledge

(1) Acts 26:26

“For the king knows...none of these things escaped his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.”(Festus had succeeded Felix as governor; Felix had imprisoned Paul as a favor to the Jews: Festus wanted to give Paul a hearing; Paul, as a Roman citizen, invokes his right to be tried by Caesar—Acts 25:10—so Festus summons King Agrippa, an expert on Jewish law, to help him draw up the charges against Paul; in the process, Paul appeals to what was common knowledge about Jesus)

(2) Acts 2:22—“just as you yourselves know”

Peter on the day of Pentecost appeals to the common knowledge of the crowd

d. appealing to the results of investigation

(1) Luke 1:3,4

“having investigated everything carefully...so that you might know the exact truth....”

(“investigated” *parakolouthēo* [παρακολουθεω] “follow up, trace, investigate”)

(“carefully” *akribos* [ακριβως] “with exactness”)

(“exact truth” *asphaleis* [ασφαλεις] “firmness, certainty”) *sphallo*= “to trip up” with alpha privative (“can’t trip up, secure”)

(2) Acts 1:3—“...many convincing proofs”

(“convincing” *tekmarion* [τελμηριον] “a sure sign, positive proof”)

(3) Gal. 1:18

“After three years I went up to Jerusalem to become acquainted with Cephas”)

(*historesai* [ιστωσαι] from *historeo* [ιστορειω] from *histor* “one learned or skilled in”) (*historeo*=“learn by inquiry” “visit for the purpose of coming to know someone”)

Our word “history” comes from the word Paul uses (“to be a historian”)

Thus, within the New Testament there are many examples of Christians using evidence (that either came from their own eyewitness testimonies, or from investigation of the claims) to support the truth of the message that Jesus is the Messiah.

2. Early church apologetics

a. Justin Martyr, A.D. 100-165

(1) life and death

According to church tradition Justin suffered martyrdom at Rome under Marcus Aurelius when Rusticus was prefect of the city (between 162 and 168). He called himself a Samaritan, but his father and grandfather were probably Greek or Roman, and he was brought up a Pagan. It seems that he had property, studied philosophy, converted to Christianity, and devoted the rest of his life to teaching what he considered the true philosophy, still wearing his philosopher's gown to indicate that he had attained the truth. He probably traveled widely and ultimately settled in Rome as a Christian teacher.

(2) writings

(a) First Apology, A.D. 151

First Apology was addressed to Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, and Lucius Verus. What is designated as the *Second Apology* was written as a supplement to the first, on account of certain proceedings which in the mean time had taken place in Rome between 150 and 157.

The purpose of the *Apology* is to prove to the emperors, renowned as upright and philosophical men, the injustice of the persecution of the Christians, who are the representatives of true philosophy. Chapters i.-xii. give the preliminary negative proof; chap. xiii. begins a positive exposition of Christianity. Christians are the true worshipers of God, the Creator of all things; they offer him the only sacrifices worthy of him, those of prayer and thanksgiving, and are taught by his Son, to whom they assign a place next in honor to him. This teaching leads them to perfect morality, as shown in their teacher's words and their own lives, and founded

on their belief in the resurrection. The doctrine of the Logos begotten of flesh is specially emphasized. What interferes with belief in this fact is the deceitful work of demons. Then follows the proof that Christ is the Son of God from Old Testament prophecy, fulfilled in every detail, no matter what evil spirits may pretend; The remaining chapters (lxi.-lxvii.) give a glimpse of the daily life of Christians at the time—baptism, Eucharist, and Sunday worship. To this day Justin is quoted as being evidence that Early Christians professed the Eucharist to be the Real Presence of Christ. The supplemental or *Second Apology* depicts the behavior of the Christians under persecution, of which the demons are again set forth as the instigators.

(b) Dialogue with Trypho

The work narrates an intellectual conversation between Justin and Trypho, a Jew. In the *Dialogue*, after an introductory section (i.-ix.), Justin undertakes to show that Christianity is the new law for all men (x.-xxx.), and to prove from Scripture that Jesus is the Christ (xxxv.-cviii.). The concluding section (cix.-cxlii.) demonstrates that the Christians are the true people of God. The fragments of the work "On the Resurrection" begin with the assertion that the truth, and God the author of truth, need no witness, but that as a concession to the weakness of men it is necessary to give arguments to convince those who deny it. It is then shown that the resurrection of the body is neither impossible nor unworthy of God. Another fragment takes up the positive proof of the resurrection, adducing evidence from Christ and of those whom He raised. In the *Dialogue*, Justin also wrote, "For I choose to follow not men or men's doctrines, but God and the doctrines [delivered] by Him. For if you have fallen in with some who are called Christians, but who do not admit this [truth], and venture to blaspheme the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ; who say there is no resurrection of the dead, and that their souls, when they die, are taken to heaven; do not imagine that they are Christians."

(3) use of Bible prophecy and Scripture

Next Justin presents the proof that Christ is the Son of God from Old Testament prophecy, fulfilled in every detail, no matter what evil spirits may pretend. The importance which he attaches to the evidence of prophecy shows his estimate of the Old Testament Scriptures, which are to Christians absolutely the word of God, spoken by the Holy Ghost, and confirmed by the fulfillment of the prophecies

Justin talks of the following fulfillments of Bible prophecy:

The prophecies concerning the Messiah, and the particulars of Jesus' life; the destruction of Jerusalem; the Gentiles accepting Christianity; Isaiah predicting Jesus would be born of a virgin; Micah mentioning Bethlehem as His place of birth; Zephaniah predicting Messiah's entry into Jerusalem on the foal of an ass.

Second coming and Daniel 7:

Justin connects Christ's second coming with the climax of the prophecy of Daniel 7:

"But if so great a power is shown to have followed and to be still following the dispensation of His suffering, how great shall that be which shall follow His glorious advent! For He shall come on the clouds as the Son of man, so Daniel foretold, and His angels shall come with Him." [Then follows Dan. 7:9-28.]

Antichrist

The second coming of Christ Justin places close to the appearance of the Antichrist, or "man of apostasy." Justin's interpretation of prophecy is, however, less clear and complete than that of others who follow.

b. Irenaeus, A.D. 125?--200?

(1) life

Born in the first half of the 2nd century (the exact date is disputed: between the years 115 and 125 according to some, or 130 and 142 according to others), Irenaeus is thought to have been a Greek from Polycarp's hometown of Smyrna in Asia Minor (now İzmir, Turkey). Unlike many of his contemporary Christians, he was raised in a Christian family rather than converting as an adult. Was bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul, now Lyons, France. He was an early church father and apologist, and his writings were formative in the early development of Christian theology. He was a disciple of Polycarp of Smyrna, who was said to be a disciple of John the Evangelist. Irenaeus's best-known book, *Against Heresies* (c 180) set out contemporary heresies and attacked them. In his day, Gnostics, especially Valentinus, mounted a serious challenge to the Church, and Irenaeus responded.

(2) writing, "Against Heresies"

Irenaeus wrote a number of books, but the most important that survives is the five-volume *On the Detection and Overthrow of the So-Called Gnosis*, normally referred to by the Latin title *Adversus Haereses* ("Against Heresies"). Book I talks about the Valentinian Gnostics and their predecessors, who go as far back as the magician Simon Magus recorded in the Book of Acts. Book II provides rational proof that Valentinianism contains no merit in terms of its doctrines. Book III shows that these doctrines are false by providing evidence from the Gospels. Book IV consists of Jesus' sayings, and stresses the unity of the Old Testament and the Gospel. The final volume, Book V, focuses on more sayings of Jesus plus the letters of Paul the Apostle.

c. Tertullian, A.D. 150-222

Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, anglicised as *Tertullian*, (ca.155–230) was a lawyer, church leader and notable early Christian apologist. He was born, lived and died in Carthage. He was the first great writer of Latin Christianity, thus sometimes known as the "Father of the Latin Church." He introduced the term *Trinity* (Theophilus to Autolytus - 115-181 - introduced the word Trinity in his Book 2, chapter 15 on the creation of the 4th day) as the Latin *trinitas*, to the Christian vocabulary and also probably the formula "three Persons, one Substance" as the Latin "*tres Personae, una Substantia*" (itself from the Koine Greek "*treis Hypostases, Homoousios*" τρεις υποστασις ομοουσια), and also the terms *vetus testamentum* ("old testament") and *novum testamentum* ("new testament"). (Jerome put these terms into the Latin Vulgate, c.a. 400, and the Hebrew *berith* and Greek *diatheke* [διαθηκη "covenant"] became "testament"). In his *Apologeticus*, he was the first Latin author who qualified Christianity as the '*vera religio*' ("true religion"), and symmetrically relegated the classical Empire religion and other accepted cults to the position of mere 'superstitions'. Tertullian left the Church of Rome late in his life and joined the heretical Montanists, thus explaining his failure to attain sainthood in the Roman Catholic Church.

d. Clement of Alexandria, A.D. 150? -215

Titus Flavius Clemens (c.150-211/216), from the Church of Alexandria, and one of its most distinguished teachers. He was born about the middle of the 2nd century, and died between 211 and 216. He united Greek philosophical traditions with Christian doctrine and developed a Christian Platonism. Like Origen, he arose from Alexandria's Catechetical School and was well versed in pagan literature. Origen succeeded Clement as head of the school. Clement is counted as one of the early Church Fathers. (He, like his pupil Origen, was a universalist)

e. Origen, A.D. 185-254

Possibly the first Christian theologian; condemned by the Roman Catholic Church for his views (mixture of pagan philosophy and Christianity); a prolific writer; textual critic; self-mutilated himself to avoid lusting after women. The eight books against Celsus, *Contra Celsum* were written in A.D. 248 in reply to the polemic of the pagan Platonic philosopher against Christianity. Allegorical exegesis.

f. Cyprian, A.D. 200-258

Martyred under Decian persecution (edict to suppress Christianity, A.D. 250); bishop of Carthage in No. Africa; wrote pastoral letters regarding the unity of the church (not a deep thinker).

g. Eusebius of Caesarea, A.D. 263-339

“Father of church history” due to his work in recording the history of the early church. Influenced by Origen and Arius. Wrote several apologetic treatises.

h. Athanasius, A.D. 293-373

A.D. 367, in a letter he sets forth the earliest complete list of the 27 New Testament books. Champion of Nicea (defending the Trinity against Arius) used whatever means (including force) to preserve sound doctrine.

i. Augustine, A.D. 354-430

After a rebellious youth, the prayers of his mother, Monica, were answered when he converted to Christianity. He became Bishop of Hippo, in No. Africa; defended gospel against Pelagianism (works righteousness) (Best know works are *Confessions* and *City of God*).

3. Medieval apologetics

a. Anselm of Canterbury, A.D. 1033-1109

In Medieval Europe Anselm of Canterbury composed the *Monologion* and *Proslogion* in which he developed the ontological argument for God's existence. He believed that faith was necessary as a precursor to philosophical argument and expressed his position as "I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe that I may understand: for this I also believe, that unless I believe I will not understand."

b. Thomas Aquinas, A.D. 1225-1274

A highly influential Catholic apologist, Thomas Aquinas presented five arguments for God's existence in the *Summa Theologiae*. His approach, which adapted Aristotelian thought, is known as “Thomism,” and has dominated both Roman Catholic and Protestant approaches. Wrote “*summa contra gentile*” (summation against pagans) (Aquinas probably never met a pagan--officially they didn’t exist in the 13th century).

c. Hugo Grotius, A.D. 1583-1645

Hugo Grotius or Huig de Groot, or Hugo de Groot; Dutch legal scholar who laid the foundations with Francisco de Vitoria for international law, based on natural law. He was also a philosopher, Christian apologist, playwright, and poet (supported Jacobus Arminius, and his Remonstrance). The first Protestant textbook of apologetics was written by Grotius, *On The Truth of the Christian Religion*. This work defends the historicity of the Gospels and also addressed arguments to Jews and Muslims.

4. Modern apologetics

- a. Norman Geisler**
- b. John Warwick Montgomery**
- c. Josh McDowell**
- d. William Lane Craig**
- e. Gary Habermas**
- f. Francis Beckwith**

E. The Essence of Biblical Apologetics

1. Defining biblical apologetics

“*Defending the Christian faith by presenting evidence of why Christianity is true*” (as we saw, this is the biblical model—Mt. 9:2-8, I Cor. 15:3-8, II Pet. 1:16, I John 1:1-3, etc.)

2. Biblical command to defend the faith—I Peter 3:15

I Peter 3:15: “always ready to *make a defense* (“*apologia*”) to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you....”

a. know what you believe

(that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself; that all have sinned—Rom. 3:23; that the wages of sin is death—Rom. 6:23; that whoever believes in Jesus will have eternal life—John 3:16; and that we are saved by the grace of God—Eph. 2:8-9)

b. know why you believe it (reasons for your faith)

God has revealed Himself through the creation (Rom. 1:18-21—His power) and through the conscience (Rom. 2:14-16); He promised to deliver us from the consequences of sin (Gen. 3:15, etc), promised to send a deliverer—the Messiah; Jesus fulfilled the prophecies, claimed He was dying for the sins of the world; and said He would rise from the dead to prove who He was. Jesus’ resurrection is the proof that He was the Messiah, the Son of God.

F. The Role of the Christian Apologist

1. The task of the apologist

Remove roadblocks (intellectual or otherwise) that keep people from believing in Jesus Christ.

a. present positive evidence

Follow what Peter said in II Pet. 1:16; what John said in I John 1:1-3, and especially what Peter said in I Pet. 3:15 (be ready to give an answer) (the best defense is a good offense)

b. clear up misconceptions

many people have heard false (and even outlandish) things about what Christianity teaches; it is our responsibility to answer their questions, and clear up their misconceptions so that they will trust Christ for their own salvation.

c. answer questions

I Pet. 3:15 “always be ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.” Be ready to tell people *why* you have hope in Jesus. Be ready with your testimony.

d. expose excuses

If you said to someone, “if I could convince you beyond reasonable doubt that Jesus rose from the dead, would you believe?” If the person said, “no,” then clearly the problem is with the WILL, not the mind (they *choose* not to believe; they *won't* believe—its not that they *can't* believe).

e. model Christ

Be loving and caring toward those who need Christ—Jude 22; II Tim. 2:24-25

2. Apologetics is a species of evangelism.

The purpose of apologetics is to bring people to the cross (not to merely win arguments).

a. bring them to the Acts 16:31 question

“What must I do to be saved?” (don’t worry about the age of the earth, whether flying saucers are real, or what happened to the dinosaurs)

b. fulfill the command in I Tim. 4:5

“Everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude.”

c. I Cor. 9:22 is the model

“I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some.”) (the summary of the task of modern missions)

II. The Principles of Apologetics

A. Recognize that Christianity is an Intelligent Faith (Jude verse 3)

1. Meaning of “Faith”

(Jude verse 3, “contend earnestly for the Faith”) Here “Faith” means “body of truth we believe” (“faith” generally means “confident belief or trust”); “contend” = *epagonizomai* (επαγωνιζομαι) “struggle in behalf of” (“agony”)

2. Biblical faith is not the same as “credulity,” (“believing in spite of the evidence”).

Don’t believe “because it is absurd.” Believe because it is true, and the evidence supports the truth of the Christian message. With Christianity you believe *because* of the evidence. You don’t set aside your intelligence to be a Christian.

3. Biblical faith is based on eyewitness biblical accounts that say the same things today as when originally written.

The Bible has not changed down through the years—it says the same thing today as when it was first written (textual criticism tells us so—discussed below in section III)

4. Evidence for the Christian faith helps non-Christians and Christians.

a. for non-Christians

(to bring them to the cross of Christ by clearing away any intellectual obstacles)

b. for Christians

(to confirm that we have not followed fables and myths; this is important when our lives are on the line—like John the Baptist—Mt. 11:2-5—or if we are justifying the need for believers to forsake all)

Defending the faith does not just benefit non-Christians--defending the faith can also significantly help Christians. That’s why the Scripture reminds us that our faith is based on the observations and testimony of eyewitnesses (II Pet. 1:17—Peter is reminding believers of the compelling evidence).

(“the heart cannot rejoice in what the mind rejects as false”)

B. Recognize that Christianity is an “Objective” Faith

1. “Objective”

Means “based on observable phenomenon, having actual existence” or “existing apart from the mind or feelings.” Christianity is not true because we believe it; it stands true on its own evidence whether we believe it or not.

“**subjective**” means: “taking place within a person’s mind”

2. **The Bible teaches that Christianity is an objective faith (e.g., I Cor. 15:13-14)**

The “object” is Jesus Christ; not a concept, but a Person. Not a way of life, but life through the Person who said He is the Way to the Father. (II Tim. 1:12 “I know *whom* I have believed....”)

3. **The key to Christianity**

The key to Christianity is not the one believing, but the One believed (II Tim. 1:12); the key to Christianity is not the one trusting, but the One trusted.

We are not perfect; we fall short of God’s glory and His perfection; but Christianity does not stand or fall with how well we live for Him. It’s not because of who we are but because of Who He is, and what He did.

If Christianity is no greater than its object, and the key is not the one believing, but the One believed, then we need to give facts and reasons to non-Christians as to why they should believe (negative illustration—the hymn “He Lives:” “You ask me how I know He lives--He lives within my heart.”)

Compare this to the pure subjectivity of other religions, e.g., Mormonism, Islam. (“You ask me how I know the Book of Mormon is true--I prayed about it, and God showed me it was true,” or “You ask me how I know the Koran is true—I prayed about it, and Allah showed me it was true.”)

Christian subjectivity is not any better than Mormon or Muslim or Hindu subjectivity. We need evidence--the facts--the objectively verifiable documents, written by eyewitnesses.

C. **The Central Beliefs of Christianity that Need to be Defended**

1. **The reliability of the Bible**

Heb. 1:1-2 “God spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many ways... in these last days has spoken to us in His Son.” (God put a “period” after Jesus—the living Word—and by the power of God the Holy Spirit, accurate accounts were written by eyewitnesses—the written Word—so that we, too might know about Jesus, the Son of God)

2. **Jesus as the only way to God**

John 14:6, “The Way, Truth and the Life—no one comes to the Father except through Him)
Acts 4:12, “Neither is there salvation in any other....” (c.f., I Tim. 2:5 “one Mediator”)
Plan A—try to be good enough to deserve heaven (but if you sin even once, you fail); or
Plan B--trust in Jesus, who bore your sins on the cross.

3. **Salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ**

Eph. 2:8-9 (contrary to the fleshly desire to earn what we cannot earn)

D. **Beliefs that Do Not Need to be Defended**

1. **eschatology (views of prophecy, return of Christ)**
2. **spiritual gifts**
3. **denominational distinctives**

E. The Need for Apologetics Today (apologetics as evangelism)

1. Our “Post-Modern” secular age

“Postmodern” is a noun that refers to a philosophy or mindset that rejects the value of rational thought, denies the existence of moral and spiritual absolutes, and affirms the right and power of the individual to invent his or her own "reality." This way of thinking is incompatible with the Christian perspective because it denies the existence of a truth that is valid for all people at all times. In other words, it rejects the claims of the Gospel on principle, without even giving it a hearing. (religious pluralism, religious relativity, says everyone has some of the truth—no one has the entire truth)

Three words best describe our 21st century, postmodern age:

a. Global

Poet Marshall McLuhan coined the expression, “Global Village;” communications, travel and even currency have become international; with the advent of satellites and programs like “CNN,” we now watch war as it happens (even our enemies now watch CNN to find out what is happening in our own countries).

The global nature of our world makes contact with a diversity of viewpoints unavoidable; instead of exporting goodness, however, our global age has seen an increase in the export of terrorism and doom. (As evangelist Billy Graham said, “The world has become a neighborhood w/o becoming a brotherhood.”)

b. Pluralistic

Not everyone believes the same thing; not a homogeneous religious situation; a diversity of views; (Islam, Hinduism, atheism); because our world is global, there is no way to be insulated from differing views.

c. Secular

This is the most descriptive word for our world today (especially in USA and Europe) classical Christian values are no longer dominant; the world has become increasingly secular. C.S. Lewis refers to it as “the Great Divide in Western Civilization (“greater than the Reformation in its effect on Christianity”). Today many people believe in nothing (“nihilism”).

300 years ago people “thought Christian” because Christianity provided the dominant value system of the day; a Christian worldview dominated all discussions of religion, law and ethics. Today, it’s the opposite—*secularism* has become the dominant value system in our world, and is reflected in our laws, schools, government and morality (e.g., the rise of homosexual rights, and “same-sex marriage” in many countries).

Prior to the 18th c. even non-Christians expressed themselves in Christian terminology in order to be understood. In the 17th c., English philosopher & political theorist Thomas Hobbes’ wrote his famous book *Leviathan*. It reads like the King James Bible (he uses biblical illustrations and biblical terminology). If you read “Leviathan,” you might conclude, “Hobbes is a Christian.” No, Hobbes was an atheist. He had to use Christian language to make sense to people that lived in his day, that would connect with the assumptions of his day. And the assumptions were Christian. Irrespective of what Hobbes believed, he had to accommodate to Christian terminology to get his points across to the masses. Today, the situation is reversed--we have to express ourselves in non-Christian terminology to be understood. This is why many Christians today are making no impact in our world--we’re trying to express ourselves in non-dominant terminology.

2. How we got to this place

a. 18th century--the Bible attacked

18th c. was the beginning of modern secularism. Universities (primarily in Europe) developed theories that undermined the traditional view of the Bible. Under the term “higher criticism” they attempted to explain issues of authorship of the Bible, sources, biases of the authors, etc. (“Higher Criticism” is sometimes called “Source” or “Literary” criticism, involving questions of sources, authorship, and purpose for writing; “Lower Criticism” involves examining copies of a written work of which the original copy is unknown, in order to reconstruct what the original writing must have said. This commonly called *Textual Criticism*)

As to “Higher Criticism,” at the school in Tubingen, Germany, F.C. Baur (Professor of Church History and Dogmatics 1826-1860) popularized a view that the fourth gospel, commonly ascribed to John the Apostle, was actually written toward the end of the 2nd c. (approx AD 160-170) by some unknown Jew claiming to be John the Beloved Apostle. The basis for Baur’s view included his assumption that no Jew living in the first century, who was a disciple of Jesus, could have called him “God.” And since the fourth gospel clearly calls Jesus “God,” it could not have been John who wrote the gospel that bears his name.

Baur also was influenced by German philosopher Hegel’s dialectical “thesis, antithesis, synthesis” (i.e., lots of time was needed to reconcile the narrow Jewish Christianity of Jesus with St. Paul’s more universal message) Baur’s view was based on presuppositions--not evidence. He *presumed* that Jesus was not God, therefore none of His contemporaries would have called Him “God.” (be aware of a persons “assumptions” or “presuppositions,” e.g., an anti-supernatural worldview (illustration—the farmer at the zoo; the platypus).

Baur’s theory was thoroughly refuted by Cambridge Prof. J.B. Lightfoot in the 2nd half of the 19th c., but Baur had already poisoned the well for many who formerly had trusted the traditional view that John the Apostle wrote the fourth gospel. Unfortunately for those who abandoned their faith because of critical scholarship, in 1934 a fragment of John’s Gospel was discovered The fragment, (P52, 5 verses from John 18) found in Egypt, and dated approx. A.D. 120, destroys Baur’s theory that John was written in AD 160-170.

In the 18th c. “Deism,” attempted to hang on to Christian morality but get rid of the Bible. Thomas Paine wrote “Common Sense” and “Age of Reason” where he argued for deism instead of Christianity (Second half of book he tries to show errors in the Bible--“You don’t need the book of Scripture--you just need the book of nature.”) American President Thomas Jefferson (3rd US President) took out scissors and cut all the miracles out of the Bible (The Jeffersonian Bible is first Bible printed at government expense).

What did this attack on the Bible in the 18th c. lead to?

b. 19th century--God attacked

(1) *Charles Darwin*--former divinity student, who advanced the theory “survival of the fittest,” and explained that the universe was mechanistic, and there is no need for believing that a god was necessary for life to exist. Instead, rather than having been created, we all evolved from lower forms of life. Instead of Cain saying to God, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” we have the gorilla at the zoo wondering, “Am I my keeper’s brother?” (Darwin opened the door for a philosophy to build on his “might makes right” survival of the fittest notion)

(2) *Friedrich Nietzsche*--"God is Dead" (not a personal expression of his own atheism, but a statement that the traditional notion of god was no longer needed, and no longer believed. The God of the Bible was thanked for past services rendered, and Nietzsche said man had taken over his own fate, and had truly become the captain of his own salvation.

According to Nietzsche, Jesus represented "weakness" and the strong are the ones who will prevail; Nietzsche projected the dawning of a new millennium, populated by *ubermensch* (German for "supermen") that transcend all values, and represent perfect humanity (god-like in their perfection, a pure Arian race)

After the Bible was attacked in the 18th c., Darwin & Nietzsche lead the attack on God in the 19th c.

c. 20th century—mankind attacked

Ideas have consequences. In the early 20th c. an atheist (who at times claimed to be Catholic) read Nietzsche, and then regarded himself as one of the "ubermensch." He rose in politics to become chancellor of Germany, and established his own values based on Nietzsche (values were similar to Haman in the Book of Esther, where the Jews were the enemy). The chancellor, "leader," or "fuhrer" was Adolph Hitler.

Getting rid of the Bible causes the death of God; Getting rid of God causes the death of man.

The 20th c. saw the advent of two world wars. After WW I, in 1933 the *Humanist Manifesto* was drafted, believing the "War to end all Wars" (WW I) was just that, and a blip on the screen on our way to *utopia* (which, to a politicians is tantamount to "heaven," but the word actually means "nowhere")

Part of the trouble with those humanists is their timing--within a couple of years of their optimistic *Manifesto*, Hitler had risen to power, and the carnage started all over again, only worse than WW I!

Without the Bible, who's to say what importance man has? The strongest survive, and bring us genocide, euthanasia, abortion and terrorism--all these became acceptable in the 20th c. as a result of the rejection of the Bible (where we are *imago dei*--created in the image of God), and thereby rejection of the justice of the God of the Bible (replaced by secular values or by *sharia* --Islamic law--in many places) If we are no longer created in God's image, no wonder life seems so cheap to so many.

Our secular age, where secular terminology and values are dominant, is an age of confusion. Secularism has not given people what they hoped for. The hope that science and technology can take over for God has not come to fruition. On the contrary, we've just become more efficient sinners; now, unlike the Thugees of 13th c. India who had to kill one at a time, we have the means to fly a plane into a building and kill thousands; we have Weapons of Mass Destruction that can kill tens of thousands, or even millions. (If we are so enlightened, why are we so afraid of fellow humans? Albert Einstein said, regarding the fear of the atom bomb, "What is it you truly fear--the power of the atom bomb, or the power of evil in the human heart?")

The pendulum has swung from progress to despair. People can no longer make sense of their existence, and conclude that there are no answers possible. Since the world doesn't offer the answers, find them within yourself. This has opened the door in the last 30 years to alternative approaches to reality and religion, such as the New Age Movement and the new "spirituality." The U.S. has become the elephant graveyard for eastern religions (in Hollywood circles it has become chic to be 'Buddhist' --but the countries dominated by eastern religion are the legacy of eastern religion's failures).

d. 21st century—the resulting “great divide”

Here we are, in a postmodern, increasingly-secular age; are we on the cusp of revival or oblivion? (Jesus warned us—Mt. 24—the last days will grow progressively darker; and the way to salvation is narrow; Africa is now an inspiration to America and the West—more people coming to Christ). India is seeing a rapid growth of the church. Our task is to be “salt and light” in the world, occupy until Jesus comes, and make disciples out of all nations (Mt. 28:19-20).

3. Response of the church

a. liberals (“if you can’t beat ‘em, join ‘em”)

Liberalism has become the chameleon that sits upon culture and changes color w/culture (and soon you don’t see the chameleon). E.g., 1859 Darwin’s theory of evolution became popular--what did liberal English and American theologians immediately start shouting? “Christianity is evolutionary” Then along comes Danish philosopher Soren Kierkegaard, who popularized the philosophy known as “existentialism”--which is a philosophy dealing with despair--What did the liberals say? “Christianity is existential” then there was “theology of race,” “theology of liberation” (which US President Obama’s former pastor taught).

Anything the culture proposes as solutions to our problems is immediately identified with Christianity by the liberals (environmentalism, diversity, expanding the definition of marriage, etc.)

Liberalism shows that Christianity can be as secular as secularism (e.g., liberalism says, “If society accepts homosexual unions, then, by golly, so should Christianity. And just because a person is a practicing homosexual doesn’t mean that person should not be a pastor or a bishop.”)

The liberal church has abandoned a life-changing gospel for the pottage of religious and political correctness. There is no longer any powerful, life-transforming message. The result--liberal churches have been dying for several decades, while evangelical churches flourish.

Peter DeVries in his book “*Mackerel Plaza*” illustrates the decline of the liberal church--A pastor build his own pulpit from four kinds of fruit wood (to illustrate the inability to harmonize the gospels). The pastor’s profound message is “It is the final proof of God’s omnipotence that He need not exist in order to save us.” In short, liberalism has become so good at identifying with secular culture that you can’t tell the two apart.

b. conservatives/evangelicals (*If you can’t beat em, separate from ‘em*)

Religious conservatives polarized with liberals in the late 19th & early 20th centuries. Most religious conservatives felt incapable of responding adequately to science, Hegelian philosophy, and higher criticism. So, conservative Christians built walls to protect the believer from the world). In the process these “sociological fundamentalists” caused the word “fundamentalist” (which originally referred to evangelicals, conservative theology and biblical literalism) to become a perjorative, meaning “narrow minded,” or “bigoted.” Through the creation of “blue laws,” etc.—prohibitions that once had a moral function (keeping believers away from the vices found in saloons) were kept solely for their isolationist function. So, conservative Christianity and Fundamentalism created the impression that being a Christian means to stop doing certain things and start doing certain others, which is works righteousness, not grace. Thus, fundamentalism has taken us back to pre-Reformation works righteousness (there are no sociological requirements to enter the Kingdom of heaven—see Acts 16:31).

F. The Do's and Don'ts of Apologetics (ground rules/operating procedure)

1. Gospel first, apologetics second

If a person asks the Philippian jailer's question, "What must I do to be saved?" give the person Paul's answer ("Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ..."). Period. It is only when someone has questions or raises objections that we shift gears to defend the faith.

2. Never give people problems

If a person does not have questions about the resurrection, the reliability of the Bible, etc., there is no need to address those issues apologetically. No need to explain why higher criticism is wrong, why Nestorianism is wrong, why evolution is wrong, etc.

3. Find out the real obstacles

Some people are mad at God (for many reasons); some people have been hurt by professing Christians; some people were taught false ideas about Christianity; some people have a secret life of sin they don't want to give up (intellectual problems are usually intellectual excuses) (people *choose* not to believe—a matter of the *will*, not the mind)

4. Always keep the goal in mind--bringing people to the cross

Its not about winning arguments. It's about clearing away obstacles to the cross of Christ.

5. Remember that apologetics is a species of evangelism/missionary work

Same attitude and approach that missionaries use (Acts 17-Mars Hill); we are to lovingly present the truth of Scripture—God's plan for redemption; if there are obstacles in the way of a person believing, try to remove the obstacles. Keep in mind I Cor. 9:22 "all things to all men."

6. Know who you are—your strengths and your calling

The Bible says we are involved in spiritual warfare (Eph. 6:12); God has called us to be part of His army in the battle ("unless the Lord builds the house, it is built in vain, Psalm 127:1") ("no one can call Jesus 'Lord' apart from the Holy Spirit," I Cor. 12:3)

We don't naively rely on answers to bring people to Christ; Clearing the obstacles away and answering objections people have to Christianity does not save anyone--God does the saving. But there is something beneficial to the non-Christian for us to answer objections (otherwise, why did Paul say "I am appointed for the defense of the gospel?"--Phil.1:16). (c.f., Acts 17:3-4, Paul "reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead...").

III. The Practice of Apologetic—the Case for Christianity

A. The basic argument for historicity of Christian claims (4 Points):

1. The Gospels are trustworthy historical documents

(primary source material)--nearly all scholars now admit that the Mt., Mk. & Lu. were written within 40 years of Christ's death (and John within 60 years).

This first point is the foundation of everything (if the documents are unreliable, then it doesn't much matter what they say--if the documents are sound, we better look closely at them)

2. In these documents, Christ claims to be God in human flesh.

(John 20:28, John 1:18, John 10:35)

3. In these documents, Christ's bodily resurrection is supported by extensive eye-witness testimony

(see I Cor. 15:5-8)

4. Christ is, therefore, God.

Not everyone who rises from the dead is God--e.g., Lazarus. Jesus uses miracles to demonstrate that His claims are true (Mt. 9:1-8--"which is easier?"). (His resurrection demonstrates His deity—Romans 1:4). The corollary--If Christ is God, whatever He says is true--Christ said salvation comes only through Him (John 14:6), so it does. Christ said the Scripture is authoritative, so it is.

B. Basic Approach of apologetics

1. Negatively illustrated

Try to get the non-Christian to consider the type of reasoning he needs to function normally, and get him to apply it to the Christian faith (non-religious, ordinary reasoning) Let the non-Christian know that the Christian faith is not "esoteric" or "spiritual" reasoning (and the non-Christian will see, by using ordinary reasoning, that Christianity is true over against competing options, or else he'll have to stop using ordinary reasoning altogether).

At the beginning of 19th c. the most important philosophical argument ever against the miraculous was presented by Scottish philosopher David Hume. Hume's argument: "You can't rely on evidence of *unique events* in Christ's life because evidence is prejudiced--either they loved him (the apostles) or hated him (the Talmud)--so you can't get anywhere relying on the unique events mentioned in the Bible.

Anglican Bishop Richard Whatley took Hume's argument and applied it to Napoleon Bonaparte. Whatley pointed out the unique character of Napoleon (who took the flower of French youth, led them to eventual slaughter, was exiled--then did it again, finally losing at Waterloo)

Whatley pointed out that since these were *unique events* in history, how can we believe them? All of our material about Napoleon either comes from the French (who loved him, and thought he was a god) or the English (who despised him, and thought he was a devil)--therefore, all information about Napoleon is obviously unreliable because it's prejudiced. Conclusion--Napoleon never existed!

When Whatley wrote his work “Historical doubts relative to Napoleon Bonaparte” Napoleon was still alive on Elba, and everyone knew it. Whatley took Hume’s argument as it applied to Christianity and applied it to an extraordinary historical situation that everyone understood, to show that if you take a foolish argument and apply it to a matter of ordinary experience (such as Napoleon) your knowledge of Napoleon collapses. But, since everyone knew Napoleon did exist, *There was something wrong with the argument*--so the argument wasn’t any good when applied to Christianity any more than when applied to Napoleon.

Whatley’s refutation of Hume is a negative illustration of the basic approach of apologetics--“a bad argument against Christianity, if applied to ordinary experience, won’t work in ordinary experience”)

2. Positive Illustration

The basic technique is to take *good arguments* (that have to be used in ordinary experience to make sense out of things) and apply these good arguments to the question of whether Christianity is true or not, and you’ll find that *it is*. (Military principles of Von Clausewitz, the great military strategist: “put the enemy in a position that what you want him to do is better than what he wants to do”)

That’s what this apologetic approach does---if the reasoning a non-Christian uses in ordinary life (which makes sense, and has to be used to function) is applied to Christianity it will show that Christianity is true.

The non-Christian, when his reason shows Christianity is systematically consistent with truth has two choices:

1. Become a Christian
2. Reject reasoning used in ordinary life (which means his world makes no sense)
(either accept Christianity, or cease existing as a rational person)

If the non-Christian refuses to make the application to Christianity, this may indicate a moral or volitional problem (“won’t believe” rather than “can’t believe”--its a choice). It would be non-rational to say “I’ll use the reasoning I use in everyday life and apply it to everything but Christianity”

Another advantage of the basic approach is that it prevents the non-Christian from thinking Christianity is out of his ordinary experience (e.g., that there’s a “spiritual realm” we enter into through “spiritual devices” not know to others in ordinary experience--i.e., a mystical process) (Pastors sometimes give this impression from the pulpit--talking about “faith” as if it were apart from ordinary experience, and not something we normally engage in--that its something that requires a peculiar ability. The non-Christian’s response: “I’m not religious--I can see this does you a lot of good--but you’re the religious type. I’m not.”

3. Illustrations of biblical faith

Biblical faith is the same faith applied when you entered this room and sat in your chair.

You could have first obtained the blueprints of the building, gone to your computer, entered the stress formulae used to engineer the building, run them through your cad program to determine the structural integrity of the building, then decided, “I think there is a high probability the building will not collapse during Dr. Stewart’s class”--so you finally decide to enter) (even though there is a remote chance the roof will cave in). Once you are in, you have no guarantee that the chair will hold you up (since chairs sometimes fail) but you sit down anyway.

Both your entering and sitting are examples of the exercise of *ordinary faith* in everyday life. Based upon a high degree of probability and your experience, you act. If you require 100% (apodictic) certainty before you act, you'd be sleeping on the ground in an open field away from trees and buildings--no one go that far.

Similarly, the probability that Christianity is true based upon evidence can never reach 100%, but the evidence is so consistent and compelling that the gap between what we can verify and what the Bible claims to be true is small--thus, the "faith" and reason we use in everyday life should cause the non-Christian to embrace Christianity as true.(illustrations--Francis Schaeffer--two mountain climbers; airplanes 99.995% safe--either get on, with 100% of your being, or don't get on—you can't get on with 99.995% of yourself)

We should use the approach of asking the non-Christian to analyze the type of reasoning necessary to live--and show that without any change, that same reasoning can be applied to the Christian faith to show its validity—that Jesus rose from the dead, and the Bible is true. Once we've done this we've entered on the non-Christian's ground (starting from where he is--all things to all men).

Therefore, the same reasoning (or, "faith") we use to enter a building, when applied to Christianity, is only different in that it takes us through the door of eternity.

C. If the Bible is true, what are the consequences? (John 7:46)

1. the claims of Jesus

a. He is the only way to God (John 14:6)

No wiggle room—John 14:6 "No one comes to the Father but by Me." (c.f., Acts 4:12; I Tim. 2:5)

b. He has power to forgive sin (Mt. 9:6)

The only One who can forgive sin—and his healing of the paralytic was proof.

c. He will raise Himself from the dead (John 2:19, 21)

("destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.")

d. He was predicted in the Old Testament (Luke 24:44)

The Scriptures are about Jesus ("they testify of Me")

2. only four possibilities

Since Jesus claimed to be the only Way to God, had the power to forgive sin, would raise Himself from the dead, and was predicted in the Old Testament), there are only four possibilities as to Who He is:

a. legend

He never existed; the whole story was made up. (interesting, since we date time—AD 2010--from his birth)

b. liar

He claimed to be God, but He wasn't, knowing He was not (such a deceiver would not be worthy of our support).

c. lunatic

If He claimed to be God, but wasn't, but thought He was, He was not sane. But how would a lunatic fulfill prophecies, and rise from the dead?

d. Lord

He was who He claimed to be—God in the flesh.

C.S. Lewis, former professor at Cambridge University said: “You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come up with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” (*Mere Christianity*, 1952, pp. 40-41).

D. Reliability of the Bible (cornerstone of apologetics)

1. Four links in the chain

a. revelation (I Timothy 6:16)

Definition: “God revealing truth to us we otherwise would not know” (Jesus “set apart”—οριζω—by his resurrection, Rom 1:4, Acts 17:31).

b. inspiration (II Timothy 3:16)

“God-breathed” (*theopneustos* θεοπνευστος)

c. canon

(*canon* comes from “*kaneh*,” a reed that grew in Nile Delta; it came to mean “rule, standard;” refers to those authoritative books that we call “Scripture”)

d. the text

New Testament Textual criticism—the problem:

1. We do not have the autographs (originals) of the New Testament;
2. our existing copies have places where they differ (“variation” or “variants”)

Textual criticism is the study of copies of a written work of which the autographs are unknown, for the purpose of determining the original text. (it’s an art and science)

(1) How significant are the variations?

Samuel Tregelles, *Prolegomena*: “We possess so many manuscripts and we are aided by so many versions that we are never left to the need to conjecture as the means of removing errata”

Michael Holmes, *New Testament Criticism & Interpretation*, 1991, Zondervan. p 106: “The sheer volume of the information available to the New Testament textual critic makes it practically certain that the original text has been preserved somewhere among the surviving witnesses.”

Sir Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible & Ancient Manuscripts*, Harper, 1941, p 55: “The number of manuscripts of the New Testament, of early translations from it, and of quotations from it in the oldest writers of the Church, is so large that it is practically certain that the true reading of every doubtful passage is preserved in some one or other of these ancient authorities.”

(2) How much variation exists within the NT manuscripts?

Westcott & Hort, *The New Testament in the Original Greek*, MacMillan, p. 565: “If comparative trivialities, such as changes of order, the insertion or omission of an article with proper names, and the like, are set aside, the words in our opinion still subject to doubt can hardly amount to more than a thousandth part of the whole New Testament.” (one page in my Greek New Testament) (None of the 1% in question materially affects the meaning of the text, and no Christian doctrine rests on a disputed passage)

(FF Bruce, *The NT Documents--Are They Reliable?* Eerdmans, 1954: “The variant readings about which any doubt remains . . . affect no material question of historic fact or of Christian faith and practice.”)

(3) Important NT Variants:

- (1) Mk. 16:9-20
- (2) John 7:53-8:11
- (3) I Tim. 3:16
- (4) I John 5:7-8
- (5) Rom. 8:1

e. Causes of Variants in the New Testament Manuscripts

(1) Unintentional changes

- (a) faulty eyesight (errors of the eye)
 - ((1)) word division (“Godisnowhere”)
 - ((2)) repetition (dittography, haplography)
 - ((3)) omission (homoeoteleuton--Jn 17:15, or (homoeoarcton)
 - ((4)) confusion of letters (I Tim 3:16)
- (b) faulty hearing (errors of the ear)
 - Rev. 1:5, *lousanti* [λυσαντι] ”washed”
 - lusantii* [λυσαντι] “freed”
 - Mt. 19:24 *kamilos* [καμιλοσ] (“camel” c.f. *kamilos* [καμηλοσ] ”rope”
- (c) errors of the mind
 - ((1)) using synonyms--*kurio* [κυριοσ] ”Lord” for *Christos* [χριστοσ] “Christ”
 - ((2)) transposing letters (metathesis)
 - ((3)) changing word order
 - ((4)) assimilation from parallel passages (Col. 1:14 taken from Eph. 1:7-- “through His blood”)
- (d) errors in judgment (Romans 8:1, Lu. 3: 23-28) (Metzger, p 195)

(2) **Intentional Changes**

- (a) changes in spelling (style-conscious scribes--labor/labour)
- (b) harmonistic changes (“homophony”)—Lu. 11:2-4, Mt. 6:9-13 (trying conform parallel passages)
- (c) filling in material (“emendations”) “scribes” becomes “scribes and Pharisees”
- (d) conflation (adding material) Lu. 24:53 “praising and blessing” αινουντες και ευλογουντες
- (e) doctrinal changes (Rom 14:17 “asceticism”--Marcion, Tatian)
- (f) adding miscellaneous detail (“elaboration”)
 - (1) titles of books (manuscript 1775, Revelation)
 - (2) padding the text (manuscript 2000, Rev. 4:8, 13 times “holy”)
 - (3) adding the amanuensis (Rom. 16:22)

2. **Five main objections to reliability of the Bible**

- a. **Not authentic** (not written by eyewitnesses, contains embellished accounts)
- b. **Written by men** (so it is a fallible book--*errare humanem est*)
- c. **Bible has been changed down through the years** (things taken out, other things added, so it is different today than when originally written)
- d. **Bible is full of errors and contradictions**
- e. **Men arbitrarily decided which books belong in the Bible**

3. **Answering the objections (summaries)**

Note on Bad Scholarship:

Bad scholarship continues to thrive in this area--hanging on to their methods and presuppositions (critical scholars generally only have contact with each other, and scratch each other’s backs). “Higher criticism” is ruled by speculation and conjecture (subjectivity--the “Jesus Seminar”)

Harry Kaplan applied the same criticisms to Homer’s *Odyssey*, and said, “After searching for sub-documents throughout the 19th century, we could never agree where one source ended and another began--so we conclude “if the *Odyssey* were not written by Homer, it was written by someone of the same name, who lived about the same time.”

a. There is substantial evidence that the Bible contains accurate, firsthand accounts

- (1) liberal scholar John A.T. Robinson, (*Redating the New Testament*, 1976) concludes that every N T book was written before A.D. 70
- (2) William F. Albright, one of the foremost 20th c. archaeologists: “We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80” (*Recent Discoveries in Bible Lands*, p. 136, 1955)

b. It is reasonable to accept that men could write infallible books

(Hennig Brand, 1669, discovered phosphorus by boiling toads in urine) (method leaves much to be desired, but the result was still the discovery of phosphorus—don’t confuse the method with the value of the result) (“genetic fallacy”)

c. There is overwhelming evidence that the Bible is the same today as when written

Old Testament—Dead Sea scrolls confirm the text (more on this below)

New Testament—manuscript evidence is overwhelming (New Testament more reliable than any 10 pieces of antiquity put together) (more on this below)

d. Most alleged errors and contradictions can be harmonized

Acts 9:6 c.f. Acts 22:9 (translational problem, not an “error”)
(discrepancies are in secondary, peripheral details)

e. There is objective evidence for the canon

(1) key to Old Testament canon (Jesus)

The Jews, the Talmud & Josephus all support the 39 Old Testament books; BUT the *key* is *Jesus*:
10% of the words of Christ in New Testament are direct Old Testament quotations.

Lu. 24:44—Jesus confirms the extent of the Old Testament Scripture (Law, prophets, Psalms)

Mt. 23:35--the historical scope of Old Testament chronology is verified

(Jesus referred to Old Testament as “Word of God.” and He confirmed the most disputed Old Testament accounts--Adam and Eve, Mt. 19:5; Jonah, Mt. 12:40; Noah, Lu. 17:27)

(2) key to New Testament canon (apostolic approval)

apostolicity (apostolic approval/connection)

f. within the N. T. there is evidence of a canon being sorted and formed

- (1) **selecting**--John 20:30 (John editing); Lu. 1:1-4 (Luke using written sources to compile his account)

- (2) **reading**--I Thes. 5:27--command the letter be read to all brethren
- (3) **circulation procedure**--Rev. 1:7 (books to be sent to seven churches)
- (4) **collecting procedure**--II Pet. 3:15-16 (“other Scripture” implies a collection)
- (5) **quotation procedure**--Jude (vs 17) quotes Peter (II Pet. 3:2); Paul (I Tim. 5:18) quotes Lu. 10:7 (in same way he quotes O.T.)

g. Why it was important for the early church to recognize and collect the canonical books?

- (1) **recognition** (God had spoken; the Thessalonians received Paul’s teaching as the Word of God, I Thes. 2:13)
- (2) **need to know which books to read and study** for doctrine and practice (II Tim. 3:16)
- (3) **claims by heretics and false teachers** (II John 9-11)
- (4) **missionary activities** (which books to take and teach from)
- (5) **persecution** (which books to die for)

4. classes of N.T. era books (from Eusebius of Caesarea)

a. homologoumena

(Eusebius, “acknowledged”) (I John 1:9 “confess” is *homologeō* [ὁμολογῶ] “agreement”
20 of 27 New Testament books were never disputed)

b. antilegomena

(Eusebius. “disputed”) “spoken against” (disputed by some, but eventually recognized—Heb, James, II Pet, II John, III John, Jude, Rev)

c. apocrypha

(Eusebius “spurious”) (“hidden, esoteric”) accepted by some, but ultimately rejected as Scripture (Shepard of Hermas, Didache, Epistle of Clement, Epistle of Barnabas)

d. pseudepigrapha

(Eusebius, “heretical”—‘absurd & impious’) (“false writings”)
includes many of the “infancy” gospels written 100-300 years after the time of Jesus

note on “lost books of the Bible”

(Archko volume, Lost Books of Adam and Eve, etc.)

5. Old Testament antilegomena

- a. **Song of Solomon**—too sensual, name of God does not appear in English Text (appears at end of 8:6 in Hebrew); called “dime store novel of Bible” by some; doubted by School of Shammai (but view of Rabbi Akiba prevailed, Mishnah, Yudaim 3:5)
- b. **Ecclesiastes**—seemed skeptical (“song of skepticism”) (but 12:13 puts things back in perspective)
- c. **Esther**—seemed unspiritual (God’s name missing) (God’s name does appear four times in acrostic form)
- d. **Ezekiel**—due to “anti-Mosaic teachings” (Shammai said ch. 1-10 leaned toward Gnosticism) “contradictions” were actually misinterpretations
- e. **Proverbs**—disputed for being illogical (Talmud “it contradicts itself”) (e.g., Prov. 26:4-5 the couplet--sometimes a fool should be answered, sometimes not—“on the one hand, on the other hand”)

6. Old Testament pseudepigrapha

a. nature

All spurious and unauthentic (many claim to be written by biblical writers, and express religious fancy and folklore from 200 B.C. to A.D. 200) (Roman Catholic Church calls these “apocrypha”)

b. number--many

- (1) **legendary**—Jubilee, Adam and Eve, Martyrdom of Isaiah
- (2) **apocalyptic**—I Enoch, Assumption of Moses
- (3) **didactic**—I, II Maccabees
- (4) **poetical**--Psalms of Solomon, Ps. 151

c. New Testament use of Old Testament pseudepigrapha

Jude 14, 15 quotes *Book of Enoch* 1:9 and *Assumption of Moses* 1:9; II Tim. 3:8 quotes *Penitence of Jannes and Jambres*

Paul quotes heathen poets Aratus (Acts 17:28) and Menander (I Cor. 15:33) and Epimenides (Titus 1:12)—truth is truth, no matter where it is found—whether spoken by a heathen poet, a prophet, a pseudepigraphon, or a dumb jackass—Num. 22:28)

7. Old Testament Apocrypha

- a. Palestinian canon (Hebrew)--contains our 39 Old Testament books (condensed into 22)
- b. Alexandrian canon (Greek)—adds 15 books to Palestinian canon (interwoven with existing Old Testament books)
- c. 12 of the 15 in the Alexandrian canon (excluding I and II Esdras— called III & IV Esdras and Prayer of Manasseh) were accepted by Roman Catholic Church. Seven are free-standing, five are blended in with existing Old Testament books, making 46 books in Roman Catholic Old Testament) (Not ratified as canonical until 1546, Council of Trent)

Arguments against accepting the Old Testament apocrypha as Scripture:

1. No quotations from Apocryphal books in New Testament (possible allusions) (not referred to as Scripture)
2. No proof the Septuagint (LXX) of 1st c. A.D. had Apocrypha (if it did, Jesus and apostles showed their opinion by not quoting it)
3. No council of the entire church in first 3 ½ centuries favored them (Athanasius, Jerome & Origen spoke against them as being canonical)
4. The fact that three of the oldest New Testament manuscripts (aleph, A and B contain the Apocrypha proves nothing
5. Syrian church did not accept Apocrypha until 4th c (2nd c. Syrian Bible—Peshitta—did not contain Apocrypha)
6. Augustine recognized Apocrypha but later (in “City of God”) gave Apocrypha “secondary canonicity” and Hebrew canon “primary canonicity”
7. Greek church only declared Apocrypha canonical at councils in 1638, 1642 & 1672 (as late as 1889 larger catechism omitted Apocrypha because “they don’t exist in Hebrew”)
8. council of Trent, 1546, was first official proclamation of Roman Catholic Church on the Apocrypha (as a polemic against Protestants—counter reformation move)
9. Apocrypha appeared in Protestant Bibles before Trent, but were usually placed in a separate section (even Roman Catholic scholars during early Reformation period distinguished between canon and Apocrypha—Cardinal Ximenes, in his Complutensian Polyglot—1514-1517—published a “Commentary on all the Authentic Historic Books of Old Testament” and excluded the Apocrypha (Luther, in his Bible of 1543, placing it in the back)
10. at Qumran no commentaries of Apocrypha were found (but commentaries on Old Testament books were found) (Qumran fragments include some Old Testament canon, some apocryphal books, some pseudepigrapha, and some secular works, and some private works)

Reasons to reject Old Testament Apocrypha as Scripture:

1. teaches things contrary to Scripture (two of main doctrines in dispute during the Reformation are supported by Apocrypha)
 - a. prayers for the dead—II Macc. 12:45-46 (became basis of doctrine of purgatory) see Heb. 9:27, Lu. 16:25-26, I Sam. 12:19
 - b. salvation by works (almsgiving)—Tobit 12:9 (c.f., Eph. 2:8-9, Gal. 3:11, Titus 3:5)
 - c. creation *ex hula* (out of pre-existing matter)—Wisdom 11:18 (c.f., John 1:1-3, Heb. 11:3—*ex nihilo*)
 2. much of teaching of Apocrypha is sub-biblical and immoral
 - a. Judith assisted by God in telling a lie—Judith 9:10, 13
 - b. situation ethics (morality by expediency) Ecclesiasticus and Wisdom
 - c. suicide—II Maccabees 14:37-42
 3. Apocrypha contains historical & chronological errors
 - a. Judith says Nebuchadnezzar was King of Nineveh (Judith 1:5) not Babylon (Dan. 1:1) (like Book of Mormon saying Jesus was born in Jerusalem, Alma 7:10)
 - b. Tobit said to be alive in 931 B.C. (Tobit 1:5, golden calf of Jereboam) and also alive 722 B.C. (Tobit 1:2, Assyrian conquest) Yet is said to have lived only 102 years (Tobit 14:2)
 4. Jesus never quoted from the Apocrypha.
 5. New Testament never quotes the Apocrypha
 6. Philo (of Alexandria) never quoted Apocrypha (Jewish philosopher, 20 B.C. –A.D. 40, who quoted the Old Testament canon prolifically)
 7. Jewish scholars at Jamnia (A.D. 90) rejected the Apocrypha.
 8. No council of church in first four centuries recognized Apocrypha as canonical
 9. many early church fathers spoke against Apocrypha (Origen, Athanasius)
 10. Josephus rejected Apocrypha as canonical (contra Apion 1:8)
 11. Talmud rejects Apocrypha (Babalonian Talmud VII-VIII, 24)
 12. Jerome rejected Apocrypha as canonical (A.D. 340-420) (he translated the Hebrew Old Testament and Greek New Testament into Latin (called “Vulgate”= common). At first he refused to even translate the Apocrypha; later he translated some apocryphal books, but said “over my dead body” will they be included in the Vulgate. When he died, Apocrypha was inserted.
 13. Many Roman Catholic scholars up through Reformation rejected Apocrypha as canonical
 14. Luther and Reformers rejected Apocrypha as canonical
- (Apocrypha does have historic and religious value—it’s just not Scripture)

8. New Testament pseudepigrapha

a. gnostic gospels

These other so-called “gospels” were actually just stories about Jesus, written 100-300 or more years after the time of Jesus, mostly written by unknown writers who were part of the “Gnostic” cult. “[From the gnostic “gospels”]...we have not learned a single verifiable new fact about the historical Jesus’ ministry...” (Raymond Brown, *The Gnostic Gospels*, *NY Times Book Review*, Jan. 20, 1980, page 3)

Many of these “lost gospels” were discovered in Egypt in 1945 (Nag Hammadi), in a trove of manuscripts written by *gnostics*. (hence, sometimes called “Gnostic gospels”). “Gnostics” were a 2nd c. cult that combined mysticism, Greek philosophy and Christianity together, resulting in a perversion of 1st century Christianity.

b. common characteristics

(1) When were these “lost gospels” written?

All of them were written in the 2nd c. or later, most of them *at least* a century or two after the time of Jesus. Thus, none of them contain eyewitness accounts. None of them are primary sources.

(2) Who wrote these “lost gospels?”

No one knows—but they all falsely claim to be written by first-century disciples of Jesus, such as Thomas, Philip and James. Thus, they are in a category called “false writings” (pseudepigrapha)—because they falsely claim to be written by first century eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus (they took on names like “Thomas” “Philip” and “James” in order to give them credibility, but were actually written many decades, or even centuries, after the time of the disciples)

(3) What do these “lost gospels” claim about Jesus?

They tend to have accounts about the “silent years” of Jesus. We know from the New Testament gospels about the life of Jesus from birth to about age two, then one event when He was 12, then nothing until He began His three-year ministry at around age 30. There was a hunger in the early church to find out the details of the childhood and teen years of Jesus, so stories about these “silent years” were later manufactured by the unknown writers of these “lost gospels.” These include stories about Jesus as a young boy, and Jesus making a trip to places like India as a teenager or young adult.

They tend to add fanciful and spurious (i.e., nonsensical) stories about Jesus. For example, in the Infancy Gospel of Thomas, Jesus is a young boy, and while playing with his friends they make mud birds, so Jesus also makes mud birds, but He makes His mud birds come to life and fly away.

A couple of the “lost gospels” have stories about Mary Magdalene, including her prominence with Jesus and a controversy she caused among the disciples (Dan Brown, fiction writer, in *The DaVinci Code* seizes on this, and has Jesus and Mary married [like the Mormons]).

c. examples of “lost gospels”

Gospel of Thomas, Infancy Gospel of Thomas, Gospel of Philip, Gospel of James, Gospel of Mary Magdalene, Gospel of Josephus, Gospel of Judas

The Gospel of Philip: Scholars date the Gospel of Philip to the 3rd c., about 200 years after Jesus lived. (Philip Jenkins, *Hidden Gospels*, page 69)

Gospel of Thomas (A.D. 125-150?) “Peter said, ‘Make Mary leave us. For females don’t deserve life.’ Jesus said, ‘Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she, too, may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself a male will enter the kingdom of heaven.’” (Gospel of Thomas, verse 114)

Gospel of Nicodemus--The first part of the book, containing the story of the Passion and Resurrection, is not earlier than the fourth century. Its object primarily is to furnish irrefutable testimony to the resurrection. The account of the Descent into Hell (Part II) is an addition to the Acts.

4. Reliability Old Testament text

a. Evidence supporting Masoretic text

(1) faithfulness of Jewish scribes

Minute regulations for scribes (can’t write name of God in a pen newly dipped in ink; must sit in full ceremonial dress; any errors rendered the entire mss useless)

(2) content confirmed by archaeology

What about archaeology? re: the Old Testament, archaeologist Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert, History of the Negev*, p. 31: “It may be stated categorically that no archaeology discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference”

b. Reliability confirmed by Dead Sea Scrolls

(1) nature of the Dead Sea Scrolls (Albright said, “the greatest mss find ever”)

(a) discovery

Discovered by 1947 Mohammed adh Dhib, near shore of Dead Sea (Wadi Qumran literature)

(b) resultant search

11 caves eventually found to have manuscripts, 1,200 in all (some just small fragments); every Old Testament book found except Esther (plus other books, “Manual of Discipline, etc.)

(c) dating

1. Carbon 14 (applied to 2 oz of linen wrappings in 1950)
(1917 years +- 10%--170 B.C. to A.D. 230)
2. Paleography/Orthography--earlier than 100 BC for some manuscripts
3. Archaeology--pottery late Hellenistic (150--63 B.C.) and early Roman (63 B.C.--A.D. 100)

(2) **significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls**

Millard Burrows, Yale Professor “chief importance of Dead Sea Scrolls is that they support the fidelity of the Masoretic tradition”

(3) **example of Dead Sea Scrolls demonstrating reliability of O.T. text**

(compare Isaiah 53 text from Dead Sea Scrolls with Masoretic text A.D. 900)

(a) **Isaiah 53, 166 words in Hebrew text**

(b) **differences in text (over 1,000 years of copying)**

17 letters different--10 letters were spelling changes (labor vs labour, etc) four letters were stylistic changes (use of conjunctions); only three letters (word “light” in vs. 11) different (three letters--one word out of 166--better than 99% accuracy over 1,100 years!)

5. Reliability of New Testament

a. the missing autographs (why don't we possess them?)

- (1) highly perishable material
- (2) persecution (Diocletian, A.D. 303)
- (3) they were used/read/copied—not venerated (which made them wear out faster) (almost no autographs exist from antiquity—e.g., Shakespeare)

How do you test the reliability of any literary work where the autograph is unknown? Three tests:

(1) internal test (2) external test (3) bibliographical test (Chauncey Saunders, *An Introduction to Research in English Literary History*)

b. testing the reliability of the New Testament

(1) **Internal test**

Does the document claim to be written by an eyewitness, or someone connected with eyewitnesses? (is there a “primary source” claim?) (illustration—“Caesar snored when he slept”)

What internal claims does the Bible make?

II Pet. 1:16-- “We did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty”

I John 1: 1-3-- “. . . what we have heard, what we have seen with our own eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled concerning the Word of Life...”

Luke 1: 1-3 “. . . just as those who from the beginning *were eyewitnesses* . . . it seemed fitting for me as well, *having investigated everything carefully from the beginning*, to write it out for you in consecutive order . . . “

Acts 26:26 (Paul to K. Agrippa) “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.*”

Acts 2: 22 (Peter on the Day of Pentecost) “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 . . .* “

The New Testament. claims to be written by primary sources, so it passes the internal test for soundness and reliability

Conclusion: The Internal Test supports the reliability of the New Testament.

(2) External test

Is there evidence outside of the document that can confirm or deny the claims the document makes? (e.g., did John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, actually write the fourth Gospel?)

(F.C Baur--19th c. said “John was written in the late 2nd c. A.D. by some unknown Jew”--why? No one living in the 1st c. could have called Jesus “God”) (remember manuscript P52 that objectively refutes Baur)

The N.T. claims to be written by eyewitnesses, or those with access to the eyewitnesses. What’s the proof?

- a. Two students of John tell us John the beloved disciple wrote the Gospel attributed to him (Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, and Papias, Bishop of Hieropolis). Iraneus in the 3rd c. A.D. relates the statements of Polycarp; Eusebius in the 4th c. A.D. quotes Papius (independent corroboration)
- b. John A.T. Robinson--”*Redating the New Testament*” liberal scholar wrote “every N.T book was written before A.D. 70”)

There is internal evidence that even John wrote before A.D. 70--John 5:2 “there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in the Hebrew Bethesda. . . .” (present tense-- “there is. . .”) Sheep gate was destroyed in AD 70., so the inference is that John wrote while it was still standing, before A.D. 70).

- c. William F. Albright, eminent 20th c. archaeologist:
 (“In my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and eighties of the 1st c. A.D.”) (also, see above quote from Nelson Glueck)

Critics of the Bible say the documents aren’t reliable because “the early church edited materials about Christ” (so that the documents don’t reflect the life of Christ--instead they reflect the *sitz im leben* of the early church)

How to respond to the criticism “the New Testament was edited”

There was insufficient time for this to happen (the way the critics claim); the New Testament documents push us back to the very time of Christ’s life, and were written and circulated while hostile witnesses of Christ’s life were still alive. The Jewish leaders had every reason to show Christianity was a fraud, so they would have pointed out that the New Testament does not reflect the facts. But there is no known attempt by them to refute the accounts (hostile witnesses would have screamed “fraud” if the disciples tried to palm off false claims as “fact.”—same as if someone tried to re-write history of events occurring in our lifetimes)

There are critics of the New Testament that say the New Testament was edited based on their evaluation of style and vocabulary (these are subjective evaluations).

(illustration--Morton and McGregor did a computer analysis of Romans and Galatians [which everyone agrees were written by Paul] to establish a stylistic standard of composition. Then they fed the other presumed “Pauline epistles” into the computer to see if Paul wrote them, too. Their conclusion—“6 or 7 people had written the Pauline epistles.” Then students from Harvard fed the preface and the 1st chapter of Morton and McGregor’s book into a computer to establish a stylistic standard of composition. They checked the other chapters against the standard, and the results showed that five people had written their book)

(the fallacious assumption was that there has to be a clear and consistent style, or else multiple authorship is demonstrated---this is nonsense, since everyone writes love letters different than term papers).

Ancient Documents Rule

19th c. expert on common law evidence (Simon Greenleaf) explains the rule:

“Every document, apparently ancient, coming from the proper repository or custody, and bearing on its face no evident marks of forgery, the law presumes to be genuine, and devolves on the opposing party the burden proving it to be otherwise” (The Testimony of the Evangelists). The New Testament, therefore, is admissible as evidence; the burden shifts to whomever disputes it is genuine.

conclusion: The external test supports the reliability of the Bible.

(3) Bibliographical Test (Chauncey Saunders, *An Introduction to Research in English Literary History*)

- Two issues:
1. The age of manuscripts (how close are extant manuscripts to time of writing?) (the closer to the original, the more reliable a manuscript would tend to be)
 2. Number of manuscripts (how many manuscripts still exist today? the more manuscripts, the easier to reconstruct the original text)

The facts:**a. The age of New Testament manuscripts**

(1) **papyrus (pl. “papyri”)** 116 (number through 118, but two listed twice)

(a)	P52	A.D. 125	John 18:31-33, 37-38
(b)	P46	A.D. 200	most of Rom, all of 1 Cor, II Cor, Gal, Eph, Phil., Col., most of I Thes. and Heb. (with lacunae).
(c)	P75	A.D. 175	Luke 3-18,22-24; John 1-15
(d)	P90	A.D. 150	John 18-19
(e)	P98	A.D. 150	Revelation 1
(f)	P104	A.D. 150	Matthew 21

Note on controversial identification of 1st century New Testament mss

1. Jose O’Callahan—7Q5 a portion of Mark’s gospel found with DSS, dated A.D. 50
2. Carsten Thiede—P64 a portion of Matthew’s gospel, dated c.a. A.D. 70
3. Young Kyu Kim—P46 redated to A.D. 85 (Prof. Anyang Grad School of Theology)

(2) Uncials (“majuscules”) (318)

(a) Aleph A.D. 325 (*Codex Sinaiticus*)

Codex Sinaiticus (“aleph”) found by Tischendorf at St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mt. Sinai and now in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg, Russia); fourth century. This is the only uncial which contains the entire New Testament. It also has the Epistle of Barnabas and part of the Shepherd of Hermas and possibly originally the Didache.

(b) A A.D. 400 (*Codex Alexandrinus*)

Codex Alexandrinus (A), so named since it was supposed to have come from Alexandria, being the gift of Cyril Lucar, at one time Patriarch of that Province, now in the British Museum. It belongs to the fifth century, and originally contained the entire New Testament (lacking now only portions of Matthew, John, and 1 Corinthians) as well as the two Epistles of Clement of Rome and the Psalms of Solomon.

(c) B A.D. 325 (*Codex Vaticanus*)

Codex Vaticanus (B), since 1481, at least, the chief treasure of the Vatican Library, and universally esteemed to be the oldest and best manuscript of the Greek New Testament; fourth century. A part of the Epistle to the Hebrews and the Pastorals, Philemon and Revelation are lacking. Tischendorf held that Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus were in part prepared by the same hand and that they were both among the 50 manuscripts made under the direction of Eusebius at Caesarea in 331 for use in the emperor Constantine’s new capital.

(d) C A.D. 400 (*Ephraemi Rescriptus*)

Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus (C). This is the great palimpsest (twice written) manuscript of the uncial group, and originally contained the whole New Testament. Now, however, a part—approximately half—of every book is lacking, and 2 Thessalonians and 2 John are entirely gone. It belongs to the fifth century. It was brought to Italy from the East in the sixteenth century, came to France with Catherine de’ Medici and is now in the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris.

(e) D A.D. 400 (*Codex Bezae*)

Codex Bezae (D). This is the early known manuscript which Theodore Beza obtained in 1562 from the monastery of Irenaeus at Lyons and which he gave in 1581 to the University of Cambridge, where it now is. It is a Greek-Latin text, the Greek holding the chief place on the left-hand page, measuring 8 X 10 inches, and dates probably from the end of the fifth century. Both Greek and Latin are written in large uncials and divided into short clauses, corresponding line for line. The hands of no less than nine correctors have been traced, and the critical questions arising from the character of the readings are among the most interesting in the whole range of Biblical criticism and are still unsettled. It contains only the Gospels and Acts with a fragment of 3 John.

(3) Minuscules (2,880)

(4) Lectionaries (2,436)

b. Number of extant New Testament manuscripts

(1) Greek manuscripts

5,750 (and counting) (*Kurzgefasste Liste der griechischen Handschriften des Neuen Testaments*)

(2) Versions

more than 20,000 (Latin, Armenian, Syrian, Georgian, etc.)

Comparison of New Testament manuscript evidence to other ancient writings:

<u>Author</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Oldest MS</u>	<u>Time Interval</u>	<u>No of MSS</u>
Caesar	50 B.C.	A.D. 900	950	10
Plato	400 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,300	7
Tacitus (Annals)	100 A.D.	A.D. 1100	1000	20
Catullus	54 B.C.	A.D. 1550	1600	3
Homer (Iliad)	900 B.C.	400 B.C.	500	643
New Testament	45-90 A.D.,	A.D. 125	35-55	25,000+

Source: "Manuscript Authorities for the Text of the Chief Classical Writers," by F.W. Hall in his *Companion to Classical Texts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), pp. 199ff.

(3) Citations from early church fathers

(David Dalrymple—all but 11 verses in the New Testament appear in writings of church fathers from the 2nd and 3rd centuries).

Of the four Gospels alone there are 19,368 citations by the church fathers from the late first century on. This includes 268 by Justin Martyr (100-165), 1038 by Irenaeus (active in the late 2nd c.), 1017 by Clement of Alexandria (ca. 155--ca. 220), 9231 by Origen (ca. 185--ca. 254), 3822 by Tertullian (ca. 160s--ca. 220), (ca. 160s--ca. 220), 734 by Hippolytus (d. ca. 236), and 3258 by Eusebius (ca. 265--ca. 339; Geisler, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 431).

Earlier, Clement of Rome cited Matthew, John, and 1 Corinthians, AD 95 to 97. Ignatius referred to six Pauline epistles in about 110, and between 110 and 150 Polycarp quoted from all four gospels, Acts, and most of Paul's epistles. Shepherd of Hermas (115-140) cited Matthew, Mark, Acts, 1 Corinthians, and other books. Didache (120-150) referred to Matthew, Luke, 1 Corinthians, and other books. Papias, companion of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John, quoted John. This argues powerfully that the gospels were in existence before the end of the first century, while some eyewitnesses (including John) were still alive.

Conclusion on reliability of New Testament text:

The New Testament is more reliable, bibliographically, than any ten pieces of literature of antiquity put together. The text of the New Testament is far more certain than the text of Shakespeare (because there are gaps, all 37 of his plays require “emendations”—guesses—to determine what he likely wrote originally)

E. Historicity of Jesus (from non-Christian sources outside of the Bible)

1. Flavius Josephus

Born A.D. 37; in about A.D. 93 wrote over 20 volumes on the history of the Jews

Josephus makes two references to Jesus: The first in his work called “Antiquities,” which says in the Arabic version (xviii 3.3):

“At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And His conduct was good, and known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned Him to be crucified and die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that He had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that He was alive; accordingly, He was perhaps the Messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.”

In another place Josephus refers to Jesus as “the so-called Christ”) (Antiquities XX 9:1).

2. Cornelius Tacitus (A.D. 112)

Roman historian and gov. of Asia, wrote in A.D. 112 concerning the reign of Emperor Nero (whose reign began about 25 years after the time of Jesus). He refers to the death of Christ and the existence of Christians in Rome: “[Nero]. . . to suppress the rumor [that he had ordered the burning of Rome] falsely charged with the guilt, and punished with the most exquisite tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of the name, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea in the reign of Tiberius . . . “Annals, XV, 44

Tacitus was hardly a sympathetic witness to Christianity, yet his writings confirm that Jesus was a real person, including the fact of His death under Pontius Pilate.

3. Suetonius (A.D. 120) Roman historian, court official under Hadrian, wrote:

“As the Jews were making constant disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus (another spelling for Christus), he expelled them from Rome.” Life of Claudius, 25.4

Suetonius also wrote, “Punishment by Nero was inflicted on the Christians, a class of men given to a new and mischievous superstition.”

4. **Pliny the Younger** (Secundus)

Governor of Bithynia in Asia Minor (A.D. 112), Pliny in a letter to Roman emperor Trajan, sought counsel on how to treat Christians. He refers to their habit of singing a hymn to Christ as to “a god.” Epistles, 10:96

He had been killing men and women, boys and girls. There were so many being put to death that he wondered if he should continue killing anyone who was discovered to be a Christian, or if he should kill only certain ones. In referring to the Christians, Pliny writes:

“They affirmed, however, that the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verse a hymn to Christ as to a god, and bound themselves to a solemn oath, not to any wicked deeds, but never to commit any fraud, theft, adultery, never to falsify their word” Epistles, 10:96

5. **Lucian of Samosata** (b. A.D. 120) satirist

Refers to Christ as “. . . the man who was crucified in Palestine because he introduced this new cult into the world. . . .” and referred to Christians as “worshipping that crucified sophist himself and living under his laws.” *The Passing Peregrinus*

6. **Mara Bar-Serapion**

Writing some time after A.D. 73 (manuscript in British Museum preserves the text), a Syrian named Mara Bar-Serapion wrote to his son Serapion, saying, “What advantage did the Jews gain from executing their wise King? . . . Nor did the wise King die for good; he lived on in the teaching which He had been given.” FF Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are they Reliable?* p. 114.

7. **Thallus**

Wrote in AD 52, his writings are not extant. We know of his writings from portions cited by other writers. Julius Africanus, a Christian writer about A.D. 221, refers to Thallus, who apparently was trying to explain away the darkness that occurred at the crucifixion of Jesus:

“Thallus, in the third book of his histories, explains away this darkness as an eclipse of the sun—unreasonably, as it seems to me.” (9th c. Christian chronographer George Syncellus) (it appears that the Gospel account of the darkness that fell upon the land at the crucifixion of Jesus was well known and required a naturalistic explanation from the non-believers who witnessed it)

8. **Other early historical sources outside of the Bible**

- (a) Seneca the Younger, A.D. 65
- (b) Emperor Trajan, A.D. 98-117
- (c) Satirist Juvenal, A.D. 110-120
- (d) Emperor Hadrian, A.D. 117-138 (quoted by Justin Martyr)
- (e) Emperor Antonius Pius, A.D. 138-161

9. Conclusion regarding the historical Jesus:

Encyclopedia Britannica 15 Ed. 1974, p. 145, “These independent accounts prove that in ancient times even the opponents of Christianity never doubted the historical accuracy of Jesus, which was disputed for the first time and on inadequate grounds by several authors at the end of the 18th, during the 19th, and at the beginning of the 20th centuries.”

Historian John Warwick Montgomery “What, then, does a historian know about Jesus Christ? He knows, first and foremost, that the New Testament documents can be relied upon to give an accurate portrait of Him.” (*History and Christianity*, 1972 p. 40)

F. Bible Prophecy

1. the challenge to tell the future

Is. 41:21-24--challenge to predict what will happen; Deut. 18:20-22--test of a prophet

2. Messianic prophecy (60 major prophecies concerning Messiah)

a. Jesus’ appeal to messianic prophecy

- | | | |
|--------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| (1) Mt. 5:17 | (2) Luke 24:27 | (3) Luke 24:44 |
| (4) John 5:39, 40, 46-47 | (5) Luke 4:21-21 | (6) Luke 22:37 |

b. New Testament writers’ appeal to prophecy fulfilled in Jesus

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| (1) Acts 3:18 | (2) Acts 10:43 | (3) Acts 13:29 |
| (4) Acts 17:2-3 | (5) Romans 1:2 | (6) I Cor. 15:3-4 |
| (7) Mt. 2:4-6 | | |

c. examples of messianic prophecies

- (1) born in Bethlehem, Micah 5:2 (Mt. 2:1)
- (2) preceded by a messenger, Isaiah 40:3 (Mt. 3:1-2)
- (3) enter Jerusalem on a donkey, Zech. 9:9 (Luke 19:35-37)
- (4) betrayed by a friend, Ps. 41:9 ((Mt. 10:4)
- (5) sold for 30 pieces of silver, Zech. 11:12 (Mt. 26:15)
- (6) money thrown on floor of God’s house, used to buy a potter’s field Zech. 11:13 (Mt. 27:5-7)
- (7) silent before his accusers, Is. 53:7 (Mt. 27:12)
- (8) hands and feet pierced, crucified with thieves, Ps. 22:16 & Is. 53:12 (Luke 23:33, Mt. 27:38)

d. Could fulfillment by Jesus be mere coincidence?

Peter Stoner, Chairman, Chairman of Science, Westmont College, Santa Barbara, CA; In his book “*Science Speaks*”--using the laws of probability (manuscript reviewed by American Scientific Affiliation members and Executive Council)

(1) if only 8 of 60 Messianic prophecies were fulfilled by coincidence

(1 in 10 to the 17th power—illustrated by filling Kenya, 1/2 meter deep in 40 schilling coins; if you could find one marked coin on the first pick, that is the same chance as 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000)

(2) if only 16 of the 60 were fulfilled by coincidence

1 in 10 to the 45th power (solid mass of 40 schilling coins, from center of the earth to the sun (93 million miles, 155 million kilometers) times 60 (extending 2.79 billion miles, 4.65 billion kilometers, in all directions)

(3) if 48 of the 60 were fulfilled by coincidence

1 in 10 to the 157th power (coins are too big to illustrate this number)

Electrons, if laid side by side, to make one centimeter (.39 inch), counting at 100 per minute, (or, one inch line, counting at 250/min), it would take 19 million years to count one linear centimeter; cube that number (19 million years times 19 million years times 19 million years) = one cubic centimeter of electrons (not enough to illustrate one in 10 to 157th)

To have enough electrons for our illustration (1 in 10 to the 157th power) you would have to create 500 solid balls of electrons, 12 billion light years in diameter (to end of know universe) every minute for 10 billion years (10 to the 10th power). Once you create that ball of electrons, take one out, put a check on it, and put it back in. If a blindfolded person could pick the one checked electron on the first pick, same as probability of 1 chance in 10 to the 157th power. The point? Coincidence is ruled out.

e. Was fulfillment by Jesus a plan to make Him look like Messiah?

Many things beyond Jesus’ control--place of birth, manner of death.

3. non-messianic Bible prophecy

a. Tyre (Ezekiel 26:3-21) (592-570 B.C.)

- (1) Nebuchadnezzar will destroy mainland city 26:8
- (2) many nations will rise against Tyre, 26:3
- (3) Tyre will be scraped like a bare rock, 26:4
- (4) fishermen will spread nets over the site, 26:5
- (5) debris from city thrown into the water, 26:12
- (6) never to be rebuilt, 26:14
- (7) never to be found again, 26:21

b. Edom (Jeremiah 49:17-18, Ez. 25:13-14, Ez. 35:5-7)

c. Babylon (Is. 13:19-23, Jer. 51:26, 43)

4. concluding thoughts on Bible prophecy

G. Resurrection of Jesus

1. importance of resurrection (I Cor. 15:17-19)

- 3 credentials of Christ:
1. Impact of His life on history,
 2. Fulfilled prophecy in this His life and,
 3. His resurrection from the dead

How important is the resurrection? Everything Jesus taught, everything He lived for and died for depended on the resurrection (Christianity and the resurrection stand or fall together; want to refute Christianity? Refute the resurrection and it will crumble)

Many people think of “religion” as being synonymous with “subjective” or “emotional,” being detached from reality, and from anything smacking of evidence and proof (the asylum of ignorance—a tower than can neither be attacked nor defended)

Well, that may be true of other major religions, but Christianity is different; other religions are based on philosophical propositions and ideologies; Christianity is based on the historical life, death and resurrection of its Founder. The resurrection was an event that took place in time-space dimension history (run your finger along the cross, you’d get a splinter)

(Christianity is the only religion that tells you how you can refute it—I Cor. 15:17-19)

2. Christ’s predictions

Over and over He predicted His resurrection: “I’m going to Jerusalem to die and rise the 3rd day” (Lu. 9:22 “The Son of Man must suffer many things. . . and be killed, and be raised up on the third day.”) (see Mt. 16:21, 17:23, 20:19)

The Jews who opposed Jesus understood His predictions; so they went to Pilate and said, “Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, “After three days I am to rise again. Therefore give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, lest the disciples come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.” (Mt. 27:62-63)

3. Precautions of Romans (Mt. 27:62-66) (the scene before Easter Sunday)

a. made sure Jesus was dead

- (1) did not break His leg (Jn. 19:33)
- (2) spear thrust (Jn. 19:34)
- (3) death warrant signed by professional executioners

b. the tomb

Solid rock tomb (Mt. 27:60 “hewn out in the rock” –Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb); entrance 4 ½--5 ft. high (John 20:5 “stooping and looking in”)

c. the Roman seal

Roman seal placed on the tomb (Mt. 27:66). According to scholar A.T. Robertson, a Roman seal could only be put on in presence of Roman guard after examining the contents (two pieces of rawhide, four large clay packs, one with the Roman seal) (capital offense to tamper with the Roman seal once in place; if a Roman seal was broken).

d. the stone

Large stone rolled against the tomb (Mk. 16:4 “extremely [σφοδρα ”exceedingly”] large” stone . Frank Morrison calculated it at 1 ½-2 tons; Georgia Tech engineers found “2 tons” (Codez Bezae says in margin, “once it place it could not be moved by 20 men”)

e. the grave clothes

Jesus’ body prepared according to the burial customs of the Jews. John 19:39-40--“100 pounds” (“45 kilograms) (Greek “*litras*” = 12 oz) of aromatic spices” [no embalming]; body placed on a slab of stone, members straightened out, the spices were packed in between the folds of linen cloth; linen cloth 1 ft wide, begin wrapping at the feet, working toward the head; a separate encasement for the head; the spices were a gummy consistency, and created almost a cast weighing 100 lbs (45 kilograms).

e. the guard

Roman guard placed at the entrance. Jews had a problem—multitudes were turning to Christ; Romans had a problem—this religious zeal could lead to a coup or insurrection (Mt. 27:62 ff.); so Jewish leaders asked Pilate (Mt. 27) “when that deceiver was alive . . .” Pilate said, “You have a guard; make it as secure as you know how” (Mt. 27:65)

Who was the “guard?” (Greek *kustodia* “κυστοδια”) Mt. 27:65, 66 “they set the seal on the stone” (so they were Roman guards—they may have been assisted by the temple police); Mt. 28:11, 14 “guard.”

Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus, who lived three hundred years or so after Christ, wrote a manual to the Roman Emperor (“*Epitoma rei militaris*”--“The Military Institutions of the Romans”) advocating a return to the methods of the Roman army at the time of Jesus (used to train Green Berets in US army) G. R. Watson observes, Vegetius' *Epitoma* "is the only ancient manual of Roman military institutions to have survived intact." According to Renatus a “*kustodia*” was a 12-16 man fighting unit, each man carried 6 weapons, and was trained to defend 6 sq feet (two sq meters) against an entire invading army; falling asleep or abandoning a post were capital offenses for the *kustodia* (execution was by being burned alive with a fire started with their own garments; whole unit was executed if even one fell asleep at the post)

4. the scene on Easter Sunday

a. **Dr. Simon Greenleaf**, one of the principal founders of Harvard Law School; wrote 3 volume “Treatise on the Law of Evidence” (“for many years was the standard American work on the subject” Columbia Encycl); born of Jewish parents, Greenleaf considered himself an agnostic. He was a skeptic with regard to Christianity, believing that the resurrection was a myth. One time in class at Harvard, one of his Christian students challenged him to apply his “Laws of Evidence” to the resurrection. He did, and in the process became a Christian. He ended up writing a treatise on the resurrection in which he concludes, “The resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the best established facts of history according to the laws of legal evidence.”

b. **Dr. Frank Morrison**, lawyer and engineer; rationalistic background; set out to disprove the resurrection; in the process he became a Christian, and wrote a book called “Who moved the stone?” (Ch 1, “The book that refused to be written”)

c. **Lord Littleton and Benjamin Gilbert West**, professors at Cambridge University set out to (1) refute conversion of Saul of Tarsus (St. Paul) and (2) refute the resurrection; after a 6 month leave of absence, they compared their findings, and ended up co-writing “Observation of the Historical Evidence for the Resurrection;” flyleaf says (paraphrase) “Don’t judge until you have examined the evidence”

d. **John Singleton Copley**, held highest office in English Legal system; after he died, his heirs went through his personal papers, and found a paper that explained why he had become a Christian. “Evidence such as evidence for the resurrection, has never broken down in a law court to this day.”

What caused these men to change their thinking and their lifestyle? What did they find?

a. the tomb

Jesus wasn’t there (it was empty)

b. the Roman seal

All Roman authorities went looking for the offender) penalty for breaking a Roman seal without permission was death by crucifixion upside down.

c. the stone

- (1) Mt. 27:60 *proskulio* (προσκυλιω) “rolled against” (the entrance)
- (2) Mk. 16:4 *apokulio* (αποκυλιω) ”rolled away”
- (3) Lu. 24:2 *apokulio apo tou mnemeiou* (αποκυλιω απο του μνημειου) (“rolled away from the tomb”)
- (4) John 20:2 *airo* (αιρω) ”carried away”

d. the grave clothes

Tomb was not totally empty—all the linen wrappings packed with spices were still there (Jesus had passed through them into a new existence)

e. the guard

What could have caused the Roman guard (*kustodia*) to flee? Perhaps the appearance of the angel. Mt. 28:11-15, Roman guard came into town and told the chief priests what had happened. They counseled with the elders, and gave the Roman soldiers (*stratiotes*) a large sum of money to say that they fell asleep and the disciples came and stole the body; and they would keep the soldiers out of trouble with the governor (keep them from being executed).

f. resurrection appearances of Jesus

(10 daylight appearances of the resurrection of Jesus recorded in the New Testament, one of the appearances to 500 men—I Cor. 15:6)

g. changed lives of the apostles

Some of the most convincing proofs of the resurrection did not take place that first Easter morning, but afterward--from scared, discouraged and defeated disciples (who had denied even knowing Jesus a couple of days before, in Peter's case) to dynamic apostles who turned the world upside down.

Roll call from history and tradition regarding what became of the apostles: James, death by sword; Peter, crucified upside down; Thomas, death by arrows; Matthew, death by stoning; Philip, dragged through the streets behind a horse; Andrew, stoned; Bartholomew, crucified-- all but John died horrible deaths for their testimony of Christ's resurrection (II Pet. 1:16 eyewitnesses).

h. worship on Sunday

An often overlooked shift in their approach to worship—what prompted such a “sea change?”

i. theories attempting to explain away the resurrection

- 1. disciples stole the body** (Mt. 28:11-15)
- 2. Jews/Romans stole the body**
- 3. the women went to the wrong tomb**
- 4. Jesus didn't die on the cross—he merely fainted**
 (“Swoon Theory”) (Qur'an, Surah 4.156)
- 5. The “Twin Theory”**
- 6. The “Hallucination Theory”**

The shallowness of the critic's argument speaks louder than the voice of the Christian.

I Cor. 15:16-20--“For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised; and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in our sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished; If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. But now Christ has been raised from the dead”

IV. Techniques in Apologetics

A. What type of “proof” is required?

Acts 1:3 “Many convincing proofs” (*tekmarion τεκμηριον*) “a sure sign, positive proof” (from *tekmar* “a mark, sign”)

1. Legal standards of proof:

- a. preponderance of the evidence (civil standard) “more likely than not”
- b. “clear and convincing”
- c. “beyond reasonable doubt” (criminal standard)

2. “scientific proof”--requirements

- a. form hypothesis
- b. repeat experiment
- c. draw data
- d. empirically verify hypothesis (e.g., “ivory soap floats,” “iron does not float”)

Nothing historical can be proven “scientifically” (history cannot be repeated as an experiment)

3. “Historical proof”

Definition of History: “a record of the past, based upon testimony.”

For anything historical, “proof” comes in the form of “testimony” (oral testimony, documentary testimony, artifact testimony, scientific testimony); “testimony” is then weighed by the trier of fact (to determine what likely happened—what is historically true) (“truth” is that which is systematically consistent with reality; conformity to fact or actuality)

B. Historicity of Christian Claims

Background-- “proof” and “truth claims”

Gospel is summarized in I Cor. 15:3-4 (Christ died, was buried, and rose the third day) How can we “prove” the gospel to non-Christians? First, what constitutes “proof” in general?

Often non-Christians will ask for “proof” or “evidence” that is entirely unrealistic, or can’t be supplied for any other truth assertion (e.g., “Can you scientifically prove that Jesus rose from the dead?”—this is an ignorant question, since history is outside the scope of ‘scientific proof’)

In studying truth (“epistemology”) there are three categories of statements:

1. mathematical (or logical) (sometimes called “analytic”)
2. observational (historical/assertive) (sometimes called “perceptive” or “synthetic”)
3. meaningless (nonsensical)

1. Analytical Statements (math/logic)

Includes statements of pure math or logic (e.g., $2 + 2 = 4$ is not open for dispute because its definitional--if you know what you mean by "2" and "plus", it follows logically that it's true, based on axioms)

Mathematical statements have a certainty about them because they contain no matters of "fact" (2 hats, plus 2 hats = 4 hats, 2 wookies, plus 2 wookies= 4 wookies) (thus, the statement " $2 + 2 = 4$ " tells you nothing about the real world (like geometry, where proofs follow from axioms).

Not all mathematical or logical statements are true, because sometimes the form of the argument is wrong-- "all elephants have big ears; John has big ears, therefore John is an elephant" is an example of an undistributed middle. This argument is wrong no matter what you put in, because the form is wrong.

2. Synthetic statements (historical or assertive)

These statements are not definitional (like math or logic), but they are assertions as to what the world consists of ("there are 50 Pentecostals in this room"--once you know what is meant by "Pentecostal" you can start checking things out by observation (look under chairs, etc.)

Observational ("empirical," meaning "known from the senses") evidence is needed to prove a statement is true (but the evidence never reaches 100%--because certainty is not defined in the statement- (one of the 50 Pentecostals in the room might be an undercover Baptist in disguise, and your checking won't detect it).

Observation cannot bring us to the level of certainty--yet we deal with these types of statements everyday--we make synthetic (observational) statements, test them out, and act on the basis of our observation (e.g., you look both ways before crossing the street--and determine by observation your chances, which may be a 99% probability that you'll be safe) (but, there is still some chance you won't make it- there is no certainty). You can't take 99% of yourself across the street--only 100%

What justifies taking 100% of yourself across the street, if the probability is not 100%? Necessity! If you stay put, you never get anywhere. What if you say, "I'm not going to decide, because the decision would not be perfect?" First, you might not be safe standing there—you could get hit by lightning. Plus, not deciding is a decision, and doesn't have 100% certainty--you might change your mind after you got cold and hungry).

Faith is required to live in a contingent universe (a universe that's not made up of pure mathematics)--there is no 100% certainty, and "faith" accounts for the remaining 1 %. That is how we live our everyday lives. *Faith* is bridging the gap between probability and certainty (illustration: Francis Schaeffer's mountain climbers)

Sometimes people they ask for *absolute proof* of the validity of Christianity before they'll commit their lives. They want what's called "apodictic" or "scientific" certainty--i.e., 100%. Remember that everyday we commit our lives on the basis of probability. Thus, no one can demand 100% certainty for religious claims.

If the level of "proof" sought by the non-Christian does not work in everyday experience, then it cannot be properly demanded with religious claims (remember, this is about "ordinary faith--the kind we exercise every day--not some mystical faculty or credulity)

3. Meaningless Statements

Meaningless statements are “not true by definition, and not able to be supported by probable evidence”

(example—suppose a person believes in a “Lion deity”—one that lives one kilometer beyond our strongest telescopes—but can’t be detected on radar, and as telescopes increase in power, he jumps further away, always remaining one mile outside of the telescope’s range. He loves humans who like Lions.

These sound like historical, assertive, synthetic statements (sound like assertions about the world. But, as you begin to investigate the claims—you find the statements are *unverifiable* (there’s no way of getting any evidence--not the same as saying “there are 50 Pentecostals in this room) Most non-Christian religious claims fall into this category.

Example: a Hindu says “Brahman is all”—(one of the gods of the Hindu trinity, along with Vishnu and Shiva)--the statement means one of two things:

- (1) there is a “Brahman” about which you can get independent evidence; or,
- (2) everything is “Brahman” (“Brahman” is just a name you apply to everything)

If all they’re saying is “everything that’s there is there,” we can’t argue. If they’re saying “it would be nice to call everything “Brahman” instead of “universe,” that’s okay, but its trivial (doesn’t add to our knowledge of the universe). But if they say you can *test* the assertion “Brahman is all”--how can you test it if it’s coterminous with everything else? (anything you used to test the assertion would be part of “Brahman”).

These kinds of statements don’t tell us anything about truth or about what actually exists. When discussing the beliefs of non-Christians, its important to determine if their viewpoint is even testable in principle (illustration; someone asks you, “Are all husbands married? The question seems to be asking something about the universe, but it really is not--it’s not an historical statement—its mathematical—a matter of definition, because if you know what “husband” means, then you know they are all married. The question can be answered just by defining the terms. It tells you nothing you don’t already know. This is called “tautology. The only evidence. for the question is definitional evidence).

Look at what kind of evidence would count for an assertion (e.g., “How many children are there in your household?”--this can be empirically verified by counting children; compare that to “The universe is uniformly shrinking.”--no use looking at the evidence, since all yardsticks (by definition) by which you would measure would also be shrinking, too--you could never test the claim.

These illustrations show *in what perspective* we are to place evidence for the incarnation of Christ (John 1:14). The incarnation and resurrection are historical/assertive/synthetic assertions--assertions as to matters of fact that can be investigated and tested, unlike definitional or meaningless statements or assertions.

If Christians assert (like contemporary theologian Karl Barth) “the resurrection really occurred, but there is no way of checking it out--you only know it occurs by faith,” such a statement would be technically meaningless (no different from the Lion deity). The fact that you believe it does not help anyone. But the Christian Faith does not operate this way. Christianity is the one religion that bases its validity on historical evidence of certain happenings (it stands or falls with history). If the events did not take place, then the religion is not worth anything (I Cor. 15:13-19) (it’s the only religion that tells how it can be defeated).

So the real issue is: Are the claims about Christ valid history? (i.e., is there enough evidence on their behalf to accept the claims?) And, how much is “enough?” (certainly not an infinite amount).

“How much” evidence for claims about Christ depends upon how much evidence we demand for historical events of a comparable nature (within the same time frame). For example, if a person accept that “event X” happened in the 1st c. based on the amount and type of evidence, then says, “even though there’s better evidence for the resurrection of Christ, I don’t accept the resurrection,”--then the person is insisting on a *special standard* for religious matters that is not required for secular matters. (This is not justified unless you already know that religious matters can’t be proven except at a higher level--but how do you know this unless you’ve already tested to see if there can be ‘religious evidence’) (like the farmer who had never been to a zoo, and had never seen a giraffe—or the man who thought he was dead)

Religious questions in history have to be dealt with like secular questions in history (if the evidence is sufficient, accept it—e.g., Did Jesus really live? Did Jesus really die on a cross? Investigate the same way you would for the question of whether somebody else really lived and died).

C. What kind of techniques do Christians use?

1. The place of the Holy Spirit

Before discussing the human role in evangelism and apologetics, we must understand God’s role:

The *Holy Spirit* convicts the world of sin, righteous and judgment (John 16:8). Its been argued that apologetics is in tension with the work of the Holy Spirit. If so:

1. what does I Pet. 3:15 mean?
1. why did Paul “reason from the Scriptures” to the philosophers on Mars Hill?
2. why did Paul tell the Philippians he was set “in the defense...of the gospel” (1:7)

As theologian John Frame says in “*Apologetics to the Glory of God*” “defending” is more specifically focused on giving answers to objections” (p. 2).

The Holy Spirit *is* working in true apologetics (apologetics is not a substitute for the work of the Holy Spirit. But the “head” is as much a creative part of man as the “heart”--the decision to accept Christ is a divine act of God upon human will, and involves the head (mind), heart and will.

Like with other types of evangelism, there is human effort involved in apologetics, which is giving reasons for our faith; but evangelists can’t take credit, nor can the apologist, when someone comes to Christ. (You can bring someone to church, but you can’t make them believe--you can clear away the obstacles and bring someone to the foot of the cross, but they still have to make a decision).

“Preach like an Arminian, believe like a Calvinist”

2. Alternatives to evidential apologetics

a. presuppositionalists

Started with Cornelius Van Til's "*Defense of the Faith*" (professor at Westminster Seminary, 1929-75). It is largely a defense of Reformed Theology (theological system formulated by John Calvin, 16th c. Swiss reformer) "Presuppositionalism presupposes Reformed Theology as being true. (Van Til, in his book "*Defense of the Faith*," spends the first 65 pages defending Reformed theology).

It is important to understand the relationship between theology and apologetics, but the Bible says to "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered," not "contend for a theological system." We should spend our time defending the hope we have in Jesus rather than defending a system.

b. complicated arguments

There is also a tendency in presuppositionalism toward using complicated arguments and sophisticated terminology in explaining its approach. The average Christian has not been schooled in philosophy and its various branches such as epistemology (study of truth) and logic. If an approach to defending the faith requires a graduate degree in theology, we won't have too many people defending the faith.

Most Christian scholars believe the truths of the Bible are understandable for all believers in matters of faith and practice (called doctrine of "perspicuity"-- "easy to understand, clear").

The Roman Catholic church for centuries had the Bible on the list of banned books, because they didn't want the laity to read it and come up with some new heresy. Luther in the Protestant Reformation of 1517 erased the priest-laity distinction, and advanced the biblical notion that we are believer-priests. There is a gift of teaching, but all Christians have the Holy Spirit to guide them in their personal study. All believers should heed Paul's command to Timothy to "study to show himself approved" (II Tim. 2:15). We should be like the noble Bereans who "searched the Scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).

c. Problems of Presuppositionalism (deductive) (from a general to a particular)

The evidential approach to apologetics means giving reasons to non-Christians for the validity of the Christian faith, including evidence for the reliability of the Bible, evidence for the resurrection, because that appears to be the biblical model. Paul reasoned from the Scriptures and gave evidence as to why Christianity is true. Evidentialists believe that we can (and should) argue with unbelief.

Since presuppositionalists also oppose "the notion that belief cannot argue with unbelief (Bahnsen, *Inductivism, Inerrancy & Presuppositionalism*), there is much in the way of common ground between the two approaches to apologetics.

One problem with summarizing presuppositionalism (or anything) is that there is not universal agreement on the definition of presuppositionalism, nor on who is the best promoter of presuppositionalism. It's clear that Cornelius Van Til, long-time professor at Westminster Sem. developed the presuppositional approach.

Presuppositionalists believe that there is no neutrality in thought and knowledge: "The fall of man (sin) eliminates any common ground for making positive arguments for the Christian faith with unbelievers" (evidence does not do any good, because the non-Christian is a sinner, and will pervert our arguments) (Illustration--the man who believed he was dead).

But most people will alter their view in light of evidence (or else we can help them see it's not an intellectual problem--instead it's a moral, spiritual, or psychological problem (e.g., problem of the will).

If people always stick to their views no matter how compelling evidence to the contrary, there would be no use for education. People often change their views, and soften their opposition to views, when solid evidence is provided (with some exceptions—such as my interview with the president of the Flat Earth Society).

One of the flaws in the presuppositional approach is that it misunderstands the effect of the fall. There is “total depravity,” (Rom. 8:7) in that man cannot climb up to God. But man's ability to reason and inferential capacity did not vanish--he can still practice inductive and deductive reasoning, like Sherlock Holmes' “Watson” (“brilliant deduction”-- was actually “induction”--going from a particular to a general).

Man's ability to draw conclusions did not disappear with the fall (otherwise he couldn't comprehend revelation--and couldn't tell the difference between the Bible and Dan Brown) After the fall, when God asked Adam in the garden, “Where are you?” Adam didn't growl or bark. Sin *influences* our faculties, but it does not destroy them. Sin keeps us from reaching God unaided (we can't save ourselves—Eph. 2:8-9).

A pre-suppositionalist will say: “You can't reason with non-Christians to show the truth of the Christianity, but you *can* show them their position is inconsistent,” and when you have done that, you preach the gospel.” But--if a non-Christian cannot understand positive evidence, then he can't see the inconsistencies. All you can do is preach, and how does the non-Christian know its preaching? Can a non-Christian tell the difference between Billy Graham and L. Ron Hubbard?

Use the approach to apologetics that seems to best reflect the biblical model of presenting positive evidence for the case for Christianity, including the reliability of the Bible, evidence for Christ's resurrection, and the supernatural nature of Bible prophecy.

Acts 17:3-4, Paul “reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence....”

Acts 17:22 ff.--Mars Hill, Paul quotes a heathen poet, and uses that as common ground (“we are God's offspring”) to argue that Christ is the fulfillment of what their poets and philosophers were looking for, and that Christ rose from the dead--historic proof of the truth of the gospel. Result? “But some men joined him and believed” (Acts 17:34). Paul didn't presuppose a trinity or an authoritative Scripture--he demonstrated by the evidence that “God was in Christ” and that evidence was Christ's resurrection.

Acts 19:9 “...reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.”

Acts 22:1 ff.: “Hear my apologetic” (which included that the resurrected Christ appeared to Paul, and that his eyes were healed). (miracle and evidence)

Acts 24: 10: “I cheerfully make my defense” (before governor Felix); Paul tells Felix that he was on trial because of his belief in the resurrection of the dead (positive evidence, reasons why Paul believed)

Acts 26:1 ff. (before King Agrippa and Festus)--“Christ rose from the dead” Result? King Agrippa said, “In a short time you will persuade me to be a Christian.”

d. pietists

Pietism is an emotional argument against evidential apologetics: “The Holy Spirit doesn’t work through argument, but through my testimony and my life.” Yes, God does work through testimony. and we don’t always need apologetics--(if a non-Christian will respond without giving reasons for faith, great!) In an ideal world we would not need apologetics--but the world is not ideal.

Pietists don’t recognize that in Scripture itself presentation of the Gospel is not limited to testimony and life (I Cor 15—evidence is presented--a list of people who saw the resurrection--so people then living could check it out if they wanted. Acts 26:26--Paul to Agrippa--”These things weren’t done in a corner.” Acts 1:3 “many infallible (“convincing”--τεκμηριουσ-- ”a sure sign”) proofs.”

Inner testimony has limited value--the non-Christian has no way of knowing what is inside of us is due to the Holy Spirit or heartburn--we know, but they don’t). A subjective claim (inner feeling) may get a non-Christian to try Christianity (that’s good)--but our pluralistic society offers many subjective experiences. Its not what can get a person through the day, but what can get someone through eternity.

Don’t let the presentation of the gospel degenerate into trying to appear happier, or into a version of “can you top this?” (examples of exaggerated testimonies--Mike Warnke, Lauren Stratford, etc.) Testimonies can involve spending 90% of the time telling how bad they were, and 10% on how great it is to be saved.

We need to give answers of the hope that is within us--and that hope does not depend on us or on an inner experience the non-Christian cannot reach--it depends on Christ (“He must increase, I must decrease”)--so shift the attention back to Christ---”What think ye of Christ, who’s son is He?”

Our testimonies are a good beginning point (and the easiest) in presenting the gospel. But we must go beyond it to show it’s true whether they or anybody believes it (Paul on Mars Hill--Acts 17--doesn’t tell of a joy bells experience--he starts right where they are, and quotes a Stoic for the Stoics--then shows them the facts of the resurrection--the facts they were missing). Even philosophers can be converted--Dionysus the Areopagite, a philosopher, was converted--Acts 17:34-- and became the first bishop of the church at Athens. Paul didn’t learn Stoic philosophy in his rabbinic training--he learned it by studying hard so he could be all things to all men, so he could meet people where they were (instead of hiding out at prophecy seminars).

Some aspects of pietism reflect the anti-intellectual adage about “Don’t confuse me with facts--my mind is made up.” Tertullian said “I believe what is absurd” (remember, the heart cannot rejoice in what the mind rejects as false) (Fideism means believing in spite of the evidence. Immanuel Kant “Deny knowledge in order to make room for faith”--but biblical faith is an intelligent, objective faith)

Note on Fideist view ”faith, without reason, is all that is needed to live” and “faith and reason are in conflict with each other: Gordon Clark argues that if Christian theology is true, then God's existence can never be demonstrated, either by empirical means or by philosophical argument. The most extreme example of this position is fideism, which holds that faith is simply the will to believe, and argues that if God's existence were rationally demonstrable, faith in his existence would become superfluous. In *The Justification of Knowledge*, the Calvinist theologian Robert L. Reymond argues that believers should not attempt to prove the existence of God. Since he believes all such proofs are fundamentally unsound, believers should not place their confidence in them, much less resort to them in discussions with non-believers; rather, they should accept the content of revelation by faith. Reymond's position is similar to that of his mentor, Clark, which holds that all worldviews are based on certain unprovable first premises (or, axioms), and therefore are ultimately unprovable. The Christian theist therefore must simply choose to start with Christianity rather than anything else, by an unreasoned "leap of faith."

V. Contemporary Issues in Defending the Faith

A. Evidence for God (The Bible assumes God exists (Ps. 14 1; Ps. 53:1))

1. Origin of the universe (Romans 1:18-20)

Where did the universe come from? How could it have created itself? Is it uncaused? (atheists cannot explain how energy, time and physical space came from nothing) The purpose of the universe is not found in the natural universe (no answer to the question of “why” the universe exists, or “how” the universe came into existence) The cause of the universe (time, space, matter) must be an uncaused, changeless, timeless, immaterial, personal Being (i.e., God)

2. Complex order of the universe

There are delicate and complex conditions needed for life—the chance of the universe being life-permitting are infinitesimally small (virtually incalculable, incomprehensible). There are at least 50 constants (quantities) present in the universe that must be fine-tuned perfectly if the universe is to permit life:

- a. Cambridge scientist Steven Hawking estimated that if the rate of the universe’s expansion had been smaller by even one part in 100,000,000,000,000,000 it would have re-collapsed into a fireball
- b. Brandon Carter determined that the odds against the original condition of the universe being suitable for later star formation (without which planets could not exist) is 1 followed by a thousand billion billion zeros (1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 zeros)
- c. P.C.W. Davies concluded that a change in the strength of gravity (or the weak force) by one part in 10 followed by 100 zeroes would have prevented a life-permitting universe
- d. Sir Frederick Hoyle (late professor of Astronomy at University of Cambridge) said a common sense interpretation of the facts suggest “a super-intellect has monkeyed with physics.”
- e. Robert Jastrow (head of NASA’s Goddard Institute for Space Studies) called the fine-tuning of the universe “the most powerful evidence for the existence of God every to come out of science.”

A Note on Science from physicist P.C. W. Davies:

“Clearly, then, both religion and science are founded on faith — namely, on belief in the existence of something outside the universe, like an unexplained God or an unexplained set of physical laws...”

3. Objective moral values in the world (Romans 2:15)

If there is no God, then objective moral values do not exist (no “right” or “wrong”)
 But objective moral values do exist (People know deep down certain things are wrong)
 Therefore God exists.

B. Flaws in the theory of evolution (Darwin's explanation of life without the need for God)

1. Sir Frederick Hoyle compared the absurdity of believing that life could result from time, chance, and properties in matter with believing that "a tornado sweeping through a junkyard might assemble a Boeing 747 from the material therein."
2. The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary tree that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference...." (Dr. Stephen Jay Gould, Professor of Geology and Paleontology, Harvard University)
3. One problem biologists have faced is the apparent contradiction by evolution of the second law of thermodynamics (entropy). Systems should decay through time, giving less, not more order." (evolutionist Dr. Roger Lewin)
4. The origin of life appears to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have to be satisfied to get it going." (Francis Crick, Nobel prize winner and co-discoverer of DNA)
5. "We now have a quarter of a million fossil species, but the situation hasn't changed much.... ironically, we have even fewer examples of evolutionary transitions than we had in Darwin's time. By this I mean that some of the classic cases of Darwinian change in the fossil record, such as the evolution of the horse in North America, have had to be discarded..." (Dr. David Raup, Curator of Geology, Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois)
6. "Evolution became in a sense a scientific religion; almost all scientists have accepted it and many are prepared to "bend" their observation to fit with it... To my mind, the theory [of evolution] does not stand up at all." (Dr. H.S. Lipson, British physicist)

Sources:

1. Sir Frederick Hoyle, "Hoyle on Evolution," *Nature* (November 12, 1981); 105.
2. Stephen Jay Gould, "Evolution's Erratic Pace," *Natural History* (April 1977); 14.
3. Roger Lewin, "A downward slope to greater diversity," *Science* (September, 1974); 1239.
4. Francis Crick, "In the beginning..." *Scientific American* (February 1991); 125.
5. Dr. David Raup, "Conflicts between Darwin and Paleontology," *Field Museum of Natural History Bulletin* (January, 1979); 25.
6. H.S. Lipson, "A Physicist Looks at Evolution," *Physics Bulletin* (May 1980); 138.

C. Existence of Supernatural

The leading atheist in the last half of the 20th century, Antony Flew, became a believer in God. Here are the three strands of evidence Flew found most important in changing his view:

1. The natural world (space, time, matter) had a beginning at some point in the past

As former *Nightline* host Ted Koppel said regarding Big Bang, “Bangs have Bangers.”

2. There are at least 50 constants in nature (that if different by a billionth of a percent there would be no life in the universe)

(“constants” include mass of a proton, charge of an electron, force of gravity) If these were different by a billionth of a percent there would be no life in the universe. Scientist Paul Davies said, “It looks like the dice were rigged in advance for life to appear.” (Rigged dice have Riggers)

3. The search for extra-terrestrial intelligence is a search based on the assumption that information can only come from an intelligent mind.

20th century biology has made it irrefutably clear that life contains information (one DNA strand has 600,000 pages of information—the genetic code is a library of information).(Information has an Informer)

Conclusion—there is more than the natural world—there is a supernatural.

D. The Seven Stumpers

1. What about those who haven't heard?
2. Is Jesus the only way to God?
3. Why do the innocent suffer?
4. How are miracles possible?
5. Isn't the Bible full of errors?
6. Isn't the Christian experience only psychological?
7. Won't a good moral life get a person to heaven?

E. Defending the faith against cults and non-Christian religions

1. Introduction to the cults

The Rise of the Cults--Mt. 7:15-23. "Beware of false prophets; you will know them by their fruits" (fruit of life, fruit of doctrine taught) (vs. 21--false prophets will call Jesus "Lord")

II Cor. 11:3-4, "As the serpent beguiled Eve...." "beguiled" *exepatesen* [ἐξηπατησεν], strengthened form of *ap atao* [απαταω] ("to deceive")

I Thes. 5:21, "examine (test) all things" (by what standard? Scripture!)

I John 4:1, "don't believe every spirit, but test them to see if they are of God"

a. Where do the cults come from?

Cults are the "unpaid bills of the church" (we are not doing our job) (over 80% of the kingdom of the cults is made up of people who sat in the pews of churches (I John 2:19 "they went out . . ."))

b. Why are the cults growing?

The church is not preaching the gospel with a compelling relevancy (we need to present Christianity as the solution for today's problems) cults grow due to Christianity's lethargy (II. Pet. 2:1--we were warned!)

c. Why are the cults successful?

I John 4:5-6 (spirit of truth vs. spirit of error). How do we respond?--I Pet. 3:15 (When Jesus was confronted, He didn't turn around and say "the Lord bless you"—He gave Scriptural responses to correct the errors.

2. Mormonism

History of Mormonism

1. Joseph Smith, Jr. born 12-23-1805, Sharon, Vermont, USA.
2. 1817 (Joe 11) family moved to area near Palmyra, New York. USA.
3. most of his family joined Presbyterian. Church; Joe undecided (too much denominational strife)
4. Joe (Pearl of Great Price, p. 46-47) read James 1:5 (if you lack wisdom, ask God) Spring, 1820
5. Joe went to woods to pray, and two "personages" appeared (one said "This is my beloved son—hear him" (Spring, 1820, Joe 14 years old)
6. Joe asked which of the sects was right. Personage said "none of them; they are all wrong and "all their creeds are an abomination." And those who followed these groups were "corrupt and hypocritical."
7. Sept. 21, 1823, second vision. A personage appeared at Joe's bedside ("glorious") who said he was an angel from God named "Moroni." He told Joe God had a work for him to do, and that a book written on golden plates had been deposited that gave an account of former inhabitants of America. The golden plates also contained the "fullness of the everlasting gospel" as delivered by Jesus to the ancient inhabitants of America.
8. The angel mentioned stones (Urim and Thummim) with the golden plates to help Joe translate the plates.
9. Joe was shown in the vision exactly where the plates were deposited. Messenger appeared two more times same night with same message.

10. Next day Joe went to hill Cumorah (outside his village) and claims he found the golden plates in a stone box with the Urim and Thummim
11. Joe told not to take the plates out, but to come back once per year for four years.
12. Finally, on Sept 22, 1827 Joe was given the plates by Moroni to keep until Moroni called for them again (plates said to contain “Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics”)
13. 1829, John the Baptist came in person to confirm the “Aaronic Priesthood” on Joe (and Oliver Cowdery, an itinerant teacher)
14. March 26, 1830 Book of Mormon complete
15. April 6, 1830 at Fayette New Testament Church of Jesus Chris of Latter day Saints” officially organized (6 members, oldest 31)
16. 1835, Joe buys two papyrus fragments for \$2,400 from Michael Chandler. Joe claims these are the Book of Abraham and the Book of Joseph, written by the patriarchs themselves. Joe “translates” them into the Book of Abraham (included in the Pearl of Great Price).
17. Smith and his followers built a temple in Kirtland, Ohio.
18. Smith and his followers move to Independence, Missouri (which Smith claimed as the “New Zion”); trouble with the locals (charges of polygamy, etc.) prompted another move.
19. Smith and his followers move to Far West, Missouri (north of Independence); more mob attacks ensued, state militia intervened; Smith and other Mormons put in jail, but escaped;
20. In 1839 Mormons moved to Commerce (Nauvoo) Illinois; Smith organized his own standing army (3,000, when total US military was 6,000) Joe continued to rule theocratically, getting new “revelations”
21. Smith became first mayor of Nauvoo (it became the largest city in Illinois 20,000).
22. In Feb. 1844 Smith announced his candidacy for President of the US (local newspaper began publishing Mormon articles critical of Smith and Mormons (Nauvoo Expositor)
23. June 10, 1844 Joe ordered his men to destroy the newspaper’s press (they did); owners complained to the governor.; Smith arrested, taken to nearby Carthage, Illinois where he and his brother Hyrum put in jail, released, and arrested again for “treason.”
24. June 27, 1844 a mob stormed jail and killed Joseph Smith because (1) fear Joe was attempting to overthrow government of US –It had been declared by Mormon “council of 50” that Joe was ordained “King of the Immediate House of Israel” (2) The newspaper’s declaration that Smith was advocating polygamy.
25. State of Illinois told Mormons to leave Nauvoo.
26. 1846 Brigham Young takes most followers to west, in 1847 arriving at Valley of Great Salt Lake in Utah Territory, and says, “this is the place”
27. 1852 Mormon church confirms that polygamy was a practice revealed and ordained by God.
28. 1871 fire in Chicago assumed to destroy papyrus Joe called “Book of Abraham”

RESPONSE TO MORMONS

1. Book of Mormon (what Mormonism says is world’s “most perfect book”) has undergone (excluding punctuation) over 3,000 changes, and plagiarizes KJV in hundreds of places.
2. “Book of Abraham” papyrus was rediscovered in 1966; has nothing to do with Abraham (book is about the embalming of an Egyptian priest).
3. 1843 Joe proclaimed polygamy as a “new and an everlasting covenant.” 1890 following two U.S. Supreme Court decisions that upheld the criminalization of polygamy and confiscation of the assets of the Mormon Church if it continued authorizing “plural marriages,” Wilford Woodruff, President of the Mormon Church, received a "manifesto" from God that polygamy should cease.

4. Joseph Smith taught that “negroes” were cursed with black skin because of their unfaithfulness in a pre-existent state. As a result, black males were denied access to the Mormon priesthood. In 1978 Mormon President Spencer Kimball received a "revelation" that rescinded the prohibition against blacks in the priesthood.
5. Mormonism contradicts the central teachings of Christianity, e.g., the nature of God (Mormonism is polytheistic, Christianity is monotheistic), the nature of Jesus (created versus Creator), and the nature of salvation (works versus grace). Thus Christian scholars view Mormonism as a "cult" (“a religion regarded as unorthodox or spurious”).

Even Mormon leaders admit that their beliefs are different from historic Christianity. When asked if he believed in "the traditional Christ," Mormon President Gordon Hinckley said in 1998 "No, I don't. The traditional Christ of whom they speak is not the Christ of whom I speak."

3. Jehovah's Witnesses

a. beliefs

Jesus is not God; Reject the Trinity; Jesus is Michael the Archangel. Only 144,000 will get to heaven, the rest of Jehovah's true followers will populate a restored earth. There is no hell (annihilation for the wicked). Jesus did not die on a cross (it was a “torture stake”). Blood transfusions are seen as a violation of Scripture. Celebrating holidays and birthdays is wrong (a type of paganism). Watchtower Bible and Tract Society started by Charles Taze Russell, a man who did not believe in hell. Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus came back to earth secretly in 1914. Have their own, biased translation of the Bible (New World Translation).

b. is Jesus God?

“Thomas answered and said to Him [Jesus], ‘My Lord and my God.’” (John 20:28)

“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form.” (Colossians 2:9)

“The Jews answer Jesus, ‘For a good work we do not stone you but for blasphemy; and because you, being a man, make yourself out to be God.’” (John 10:33)

“We have also as a physician the Lord our God, Jesus the Christ “(Ignatius, *Ephesians*) (A.D. 120)

“Christ Jesus, our Lord and God, and Savior, and King.” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, X.1) (c.a. A.D. 170)

“Being both man and God . . . called by the name of Jesus Christ.” (Tertullian, *Against Praxeas*, ii) (c.a. A.D. 200)

Even secular historian Pliny the Younger, writing about A.D. 112 to Emperor Trajan, stated that Christians worshipped Christ as God.

c. Questions for Jehovah's Witnesses

(1) Do you believe that only God should be worshipped?

Deut 6:13 “You shall worship Him.” Luke 4:8 “It is written, ‘you shall worship the lord your God and serve Him only.’” Hebrews 1:6 “And when He again brings his first-born into the inhabited earth, He says, ‘And let all God's angels worship Him.’” (New World Translation)

If you believe that only God should be worshipped, please explain Heb. 1:6.

(2) Who raised Jesus from the dead?

The Father--Galatians 1:1 "God the Father who raised [Jesus] from the dead"

The Son—John 2:19 "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (2:21 "He was speaking of the temple of His body")

The Spirit—Rom 8:11 "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

(therefore, the Trinity raised Jesus from the dead)

(3) Who is the Alpha and Omega? Who is the First and the Last?

Isaiah 44:6 "Thus says Jehovah, the King of Israel, and His Redeemer, Jehovah of Hosts: I am the first and the last; and there is no God besides me."

Rev. 1:8 "I am the Alpha and Omega" says the Lord God, "who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." (New World Translation says "Jehovah God")

Rev. 22:13 "I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end"

(Therefore, Jehovah is "the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." So, who is Jehovah?)

Rev. 1:13-18 "... one like the Son of man ... (17) "... and He laid His right hand upon me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last (18) and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore." (unless there are two "firsts" and two "lasts" Jesus is Jehovah)

Rev. 22:13-16 "I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end... "I Jesus ..."

(Jesus is the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last [consistent with Rev. 1:17-18]; based on Rev. 1:8 the Alpha and Omega is Jehovah God)

(The Alpha and Omega is the same as the First and the Last (Rev. 22:13)--Thus, Jesus is Jehovah, the Alpha and Omega, the First and the Last)

(4) Who is the Creator?

Col. 1:15-16 "For by Him all things were created, in the heavens and on the earth ... all things have been created by Him and for Him."

Isaiah 44:24 "Thus says the LORD, our Redeemer, and the one who formed you from the womb, I, the LORD am the maker of all things..."

(Since Jesus created everything, and since the LORD ("Jehovah" in Hebrew) did it by Himself, Jehovah the Creator must be Jesus)

(5) Who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush?

Ex. 3:14 “And God said to Moses, ‘I am who I am.’” (Heb. *echyeh asher echeh*. LXX translated the Hebrew into $\epsilon\gamma\omega \epsilon\mu\iota \omicron \omega\nu$ (ego eimi o own))

John 8:58 “Before Abraham was, I am.” (Gk $\pi\rho\iota\nu \alpha\beta\rho\alpha\alpha\mu \gamma\epsilon\nu\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota \epsilon\gamma\omega \epsilon\iota\mu\iota$) (Reaction of the Jews: “They picked up stones to throw at Him.” recognizing a claim to deity)

(6) Who is the “Mighty God?”

Isaiah 10:21, Jehovah is called the “Mighty God.” Deut 10:17, “Jehovah is . . . the mighty. . .” (Neh. 9:32, “the great, the mighty and the awesome”). Isaiah 9:6, “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us . . . and His name will be called . . . “Mighty God.”

(7) Who is “Almighty God?”

Rev. 1:8 “I am the Alpha and Omega” says the Lord God, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (NWT “says Jehovah God”)

Rev. 1:17-18 “I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore . . .”

Rev. 22:13-16 “I am the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end”

4. Islam**a. Basic tenets of Islam**

- (1) One God (named “Allah”)
- (2) Muhammed is the last and greatest prophet of Allah

b. Muslim (followers of Islam) sources for faith and practice

- (1) Qur’an (words spoken from God to Muhammed)

Qur’an says words of the Qur’an were delivered by Allah himself when he appeared to Muhammed as a man; also delivered by the holy spirit; also delivered by angels; finally, the words were delivered by Michael the Archangel, then written down)

- (2) Hadith (words and deeds of Muhammed)
- (3) Traditions
 - (a) Successor to Muhammed

((1)) Sunni

Upon Muhammed’s death, the majority of Muslims selected a caliph (ruler)

((2)) Shia

(“Shia” = “Party of Ali”). Ali and his descendants are the true Imams, leaders in the Muslim community and keepers of doctrine; the 12th Imam, Muhammad al-Muntazar, also known as Sahib al-Zaman [the Lord of the Age] is believed to have disappeared, and is supposed to return at the end of the age and will restore the Shia community to its rightful place, and usher in a perfect Islamic society). The doctrine of the Imamate or imamah, creates a number of distinct differences between Sunni and Shiite Islam. Sunnis do not accept this doctrine, and consequently do not see the Imams as infallible, sinless, or as a source of absolute religious authority.

(b) halal (“permitted”)

In contrast to haraam, that which is forbidden. This includes behavior, speech, dress, conduct, manner and dietary laws.

- (4) Teachings and interpretations of current imams (leaders) (including “fatwahs” =decrees)

c. **Contrasts of Islam and Christianity**

(1) God

Islam

one God (Allah)
creator
impersonal
unitaritan

Christianity

one God
creator
personal
Trinitarian

Allah is never described as “imminent” (no divine human intimacy). A Muslim does not have a “personal relationship” with Allah in the way Christians speak of a personal relationship with God. Allah is a transcendent judge, never a close friend. There is no “father-child” relationship between Muslims and Allah.

In Muslim theology, a Trinitarian view of God is the highest of sins (Islamic equivalent to blasphemy of the Holy Spirit) (Surah 4:116)

(2) Jesus

Islam

born of a virgin
sinless
not the Son of God
did not die on the cross

Christianity

born of a virgin
sinless
Son of God
died on cross for sins

d. **Reaching Muslims with the Gospel**

F. Note on Roman Catholicism

G. The Question of “What is Truth?”

Sources of Truth:

1. empiricism

“perceptual truth” (truth is the result of direct observation from the five senses) (Thomas, John 20) (relies on accuracy of our senses and the validity of our observation); limits a person to the natural world (no ability to investigate spiritual realm).

2. rationalism

“conceptual truth” (what reason and logic tell us—what the mind can absorb); looks to harmony of ideas to arrive at truth (relies on finite reasoning); Acts 26:25, Paul refers to “sober truth” = rationality.

3. utilitarianism

“pragmatic truth” (does it work?); results show truthfulness (relies on assumption that because something works, it’s true) (beware, I John 4:1)

4. scientific

Requires repeating experiment, draw data, empirically verify hypothesis.

5. revealed

“absolute truth” (John 14:6) tells us the *purpose* for humanity (which can’t be discovered by reason); tells significance of crucifixion and resurrection (Plato: “if there is more about truth than the mind will tell us, then the gods will have to reveal it.”).

H. Misconceptions about Christianity

1. Christianity is a blind Faith

2. Christianity is a subjective Faith

3. Christianity has little or no historical basis

I. Seven Reasons I am a Christian

- 1. Uniqueness of the Bible**
- 2. Bible prophecy**
- 3. Resurrection of Christ**
- 4. Conversion of Saul of Tarsus**
- 5. The Jew**
- 6. Person of Christ**
- 7. Christ changed my life**

VI. Concluding thoughts on apologetics