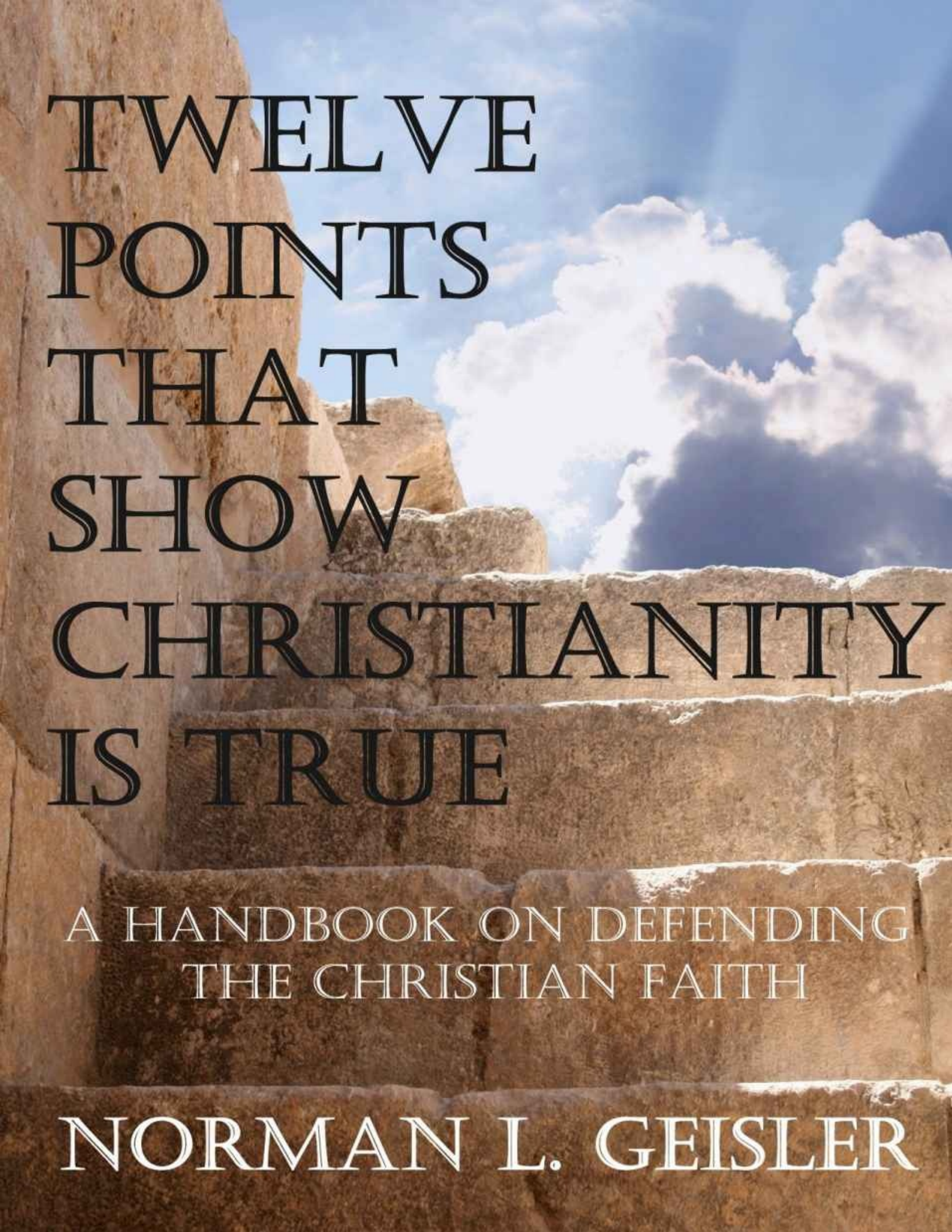
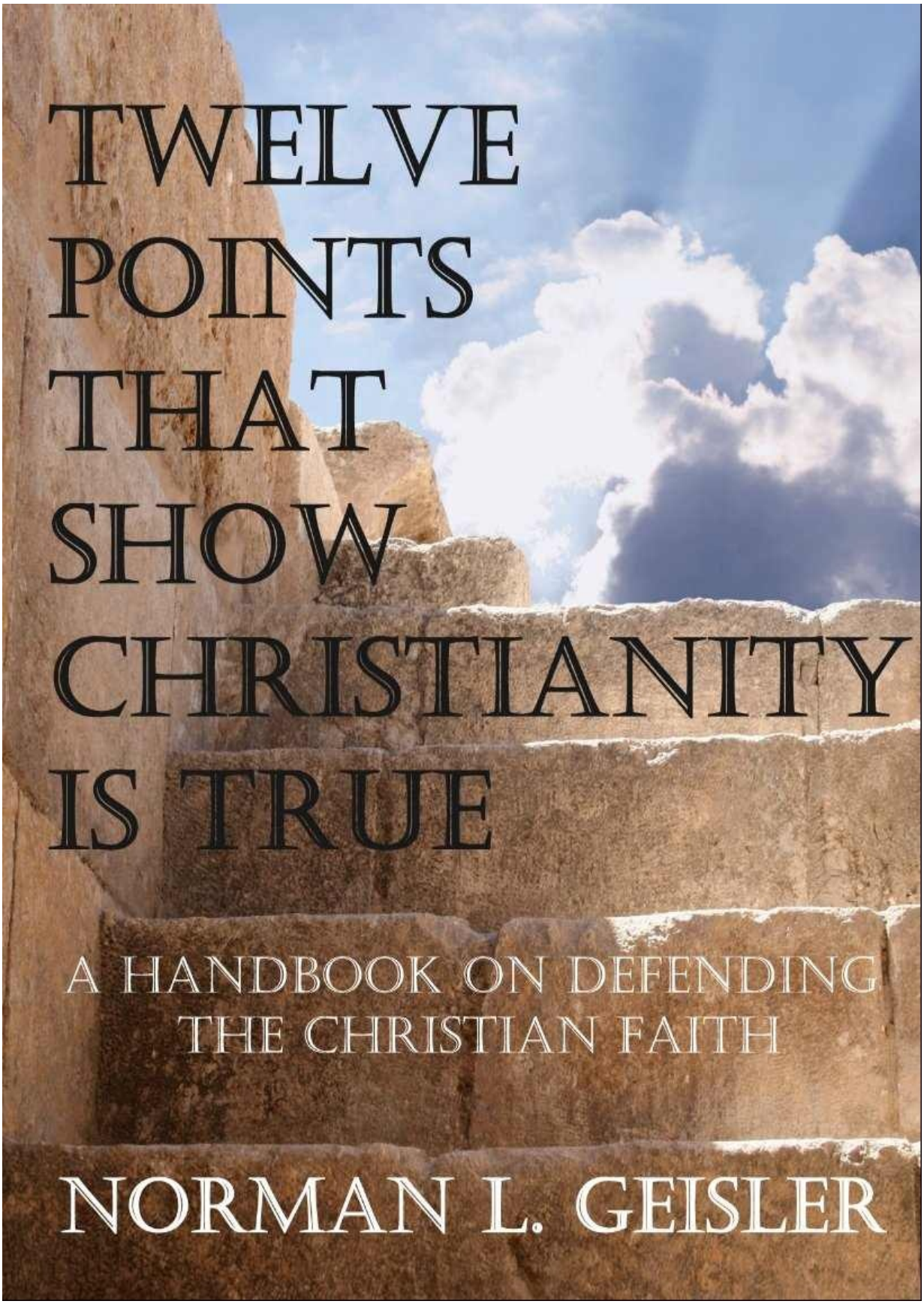

TWELVE POINTS THAT SHOW CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE
A HANDBOOK ON DEFENDING THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
NORMAN L. GEISLER


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By Dr. Norman L. Geisler

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Cover Photo: iStockPhoto.com. Used with permission. The "stairway to heaven" photo was selected to symbolize how the twelve points of this book logically build a solid staircase of steps in the light of the evidence. This journey is one of steps into the light rather than an irrational leap into the dark.

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INTRODUCTION

JESUS SAID, “I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE. No one comes to the father except through me” (John 14:6). He added, “I am the door; if anyone enters through me he shall be saved.” But “he who does not enter into the fold of the sheep, but climbs in another way, he is a thief and a robber” (John 10:1, 9). The apostle Paul agreed, insisting, “There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Peter declared, “Neither is there salvation in any other for there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

Many people have difficulty accepting these claims because they seem so narrow. After all, there are many claimants to truth in the current marketplace of ideas. Muhammad claimed to be the last of the prophets, giving the final word from God in the Qur’an. Millions hold that Buddha is the truly Enlightened One. Confucius believed he had discovered the way of wisdom. And Hindus affirm that Krishna is an incarnation of God for mankind. Add to this literally thousands of sects and cults who claim to have a direct pipeline to God and one can understand the reluctance of our generations to accept the unique claims of Christ. Moreover, a rising tide of atheists says there is no God at all. And untold numbers of agnostics don’t know if there is a God, and skeptics call on us to doubt the existence of any such being. Who is right? And how is one to know?

In such a world, one should heed the Socratic dictum that the unexamined life is not worth living by insisting that the unexamined faith is not worth believing. After all, seventy devout followers of David Koresh went up in flames with him in Waco, Texas, and over 700 followers of Jim Jones committed suicide with their cult leader in Guyana. And then there are hundreds of Muslim

suicide bombers who have laid their life down for Allah. Clearly blind faith can be disastrous in this life—and in the life beyond this one.

We hold that while God does want to reach our hearts, He does not bypass our minds in the process. The Jewish prophet Isaiah wrote, “Come now let us reason together, said the Lord” (1:18). The apostle Peter urged Christians to “give a reason for the hope that is in them” (1 Peter 3:15). Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:32). John added, “Believe not every spirit but test the spirits to see whether they are of God” (1 John 4:1).

Indeed, Christ does not call on us to make a leap of faith in the dark but to take a step of faith in the light—in the light of the evidence. No sensible person would close his eyes and leap into a dark elevator without knowing there is a floor there to hold him up. Likewise, Christ does not call on people to make thoughtless decisions about this life or about the next one. Instead, he insisted that we must love God with our mind as well as our heart (Mat. 22:37). He warned against “false prophets” (Mat. 24:11) and false religion (Mat. 23:13f) which will mislead many.

So, it is necessary for a truth seeker to demand reasonable evidence before he or she makes a firm or final decision. This is exactly what Paul did by “reasoning in the synagogues... and in the market place... and also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him” (Acts 17:16, 17). And he did so with good results for “some of them were persuaded” (v. 4), including a philosopher name Dionysius, Damaris, and others (v. 33).

It is in this spirit that we invite the atheist, agnostic, skeptic, and other non-Christians to examine the evidence for the Christian Faith for themselves. We encourage everyone to look carefully and with an open mind at the premises that we use to conclude that Jesus Christ to be the way, the truth, life, and the only way to God the Father. We set our evidence forth in twelve chapters which

build logically upon one another. Chapter one provides a firm foundation upon which chapter two and the subsequent chapters build upon. The conclusion of each chapter serves as a premise for the chapter(s) that succeeds it. We begin our quest for truth on the ground level with an examination of whether there is such a thing as truth and then move step by step, chapter by chapter, to see whether Christianity is true and the Gospel of Christ is the only way of salvation, as it claims to be.

Welcome to the journey.

CHAPTER 1: TRUTH ABOUT REALITY IS KNOWABLE

Introduction

The starting point in the quest for truth should be the real world. For truth is what corresponds to reality. Hence, to know a statement is really true, there must be some real object about which the true statement is being made.[1] The statement "I am writing on a brown desk" is true only because there is in reality a brown desk on which I am writing. Our starting point in the quest for truth is the real world. Of course, some skeptics have denied that there is really a real world. So, we must begin by showing that something really exists.

There is a Real World

It is literally undeniable that something really exists. For example, I exist. To deny that I exist, I must affirm, "I do not exist." But I would have to exist to make this denial. Hence, my own existence is literally undeniable. Therefore, something really exists—I do.

But can we know that anything else exists? Yes, you do. Otherwise, how could you be reading this book? Unless we wish to deny all our senses, then a real world exists outside of ourselves. But it is very difficult to deny anything else exists for two reasons. First, everything cannot be an illusion because we cannot know what is not real unless we have a backdrop of reality over against which we can know it is not real. Second, even the skeptic who asks us not to trust our senses is inconsistent because he expects us to trust our senses when we listen to his lecture and when we read his writing! So, there is a real world, and we cannot really deny it without at least implying it.

Truth About Reality is Knowable

But can we know the truth about the real world? Yes, we cannot deny it. For those who say that we cannot know any truth about the real world believe that they know that truth about the real world. For any statement about the real world that claims to be true is itself a truth that they claim to know about the real world. Hence, their statement is self-defeating. When the skeptic states that we cannot know any truth about the real world that statement is a truth claim about the real world. Likewise, any statement that implies that reality goes beyond our ability to know it is a statement about reality that they claim to know is true. Zen Buddhists, for example, will say that we cannot know the Tao (ultimate reality). But when they do so, they too are making a statement about the Tao which claims that we cannot make any statements about the Tao. This is self-defeating because their statement would have to be wrong to be right. And obviously that is self-defeating.

Other attempts to avoid knowledge about reality fall into the same trap. For example some claim that we cannot know Divine reality (God) because God is infinite. Hence, we must remain in ignorance of Him. But this too is subject to serious problems. For it wrongly assumes we must have infinite knowledge of God in order to truly know Him. But this is not so since we can apprehend Him without completely comprehending Him. Just as we can grasp a rope that is too long to see either end, even so we can grasp God who has no limits without completely understanding everything about Him. Imperfect knowledge is not no knowledge. In fact, we could not even know it was imperfect (not-perfect) unless we had some idea of the perfect. So, the real world is knowable. To deny it is to know it.

So, we can know many things. We know that we exist. We know there is a real world. We know that something cannot both exist and not exist at the same time. We know that some things change and many other things (see chapter 3 below).

What Is Truth?

But what is truth? Truth is what corresponds to reality. Truth matches its object. If I say, “There are two coins in my pocket,” the statement is true because there are in fact two coins in my pocket. The statement matches the facts. Truth is telling it like it is.

What is falsehood? It is not telling it like it is. It is making a statement that does not correspond to reality. So, truth is what corresponds to reality, and falsehood is what does not.[2] So, both total skepticism and total agnosticism fail because there are many things we can and do know.

Skepticism Fails

Total skepticism and agnosticism are wrong. The total skeptic claims he doubts everything. But he does not doubt his doubt. He is not skeptical about his skepticism. As the famous philosopher Rene Descartes[3] showed, the more you doubt, the surer you are sure you are doubting. And the more certain you become that you have been engaged in doubting, the more you are sure you exist. For you cannot doubt unless you exist. You have to exist to be able to doubt. So, doubt really leads to certainty about reality—the reality that you exist.

Agnosticism Fails

The philosopher Immanuel Kant said we must remain agnostic about ultimate reality.[4] But he too was not agnostic about his agnosticism. He claimed to know that he could not know reality in itself. But the very claim that I know that I cannot know reality is itself a claim to know something about reality. In reality, there is no way to deny that we can know reality without knowing it. [5]

What We Know

In brief, there is reality, and we can know it. I know that I exist. I know a world exists outside me. I know others exist. I also know that the laws of logic are true. I know the opposite of true is false (see chapter 2 below). I know that

total skeptics and agnostics are wrong. I know that we can know many things.[6] And, as we will see later (in chapter 3), we can know whether a theistic God exists, whether miracles are possible (in chapter 4), and whether Jesus is the Son of God (in chapters 7 and 8 below). In short, we can know whether Christianity is true. Let's begin to see how this is possible by looking at a fundamental thought, namely, that the opposite of true is false.

CHAPTER 2: OPPOSITES CANNOT BOTH BE TRUE

The Fundamental Laws of All Thought

The most fundamental law of all thought is the Law of Non-contradiction. It states that something cannot be both true and false at the same time and in the same sense. There are two other Laws like it. Together they state:

Law of Non-contradiction: A is not non-A.

Law of Identity: A is A

Law of Excluded Middle: either A or Non-A (but not both).

As it relates to God, these laws inform us of some very important things. For example, they show that:

God is God.

God is not non-God.

Either God or non-God.

We know these are true because they are self-evident, that is, the subject (what is before the "is") says the same thing as the predicate (what is after the "is). Other examples of self-evident statements are:

All triangles are three-sided figures.

All circles are round.

All husbands are married men.

Besides being self-evident, we know these three laws of thought are true because they cannot be denied without being affirmed. For example, we cannot deny the Law of Non-contradiction without using the Law of Non-Contradiction.

For if we affirm that “something can be both true and false at the same time and in the same sense,” this sentence makes no sense unless we assume that it is a non-contradictory statement (and the opposite of it cannot be true).

It is saying that “opposites can both be true,” but the opposite of this statement cannot also be true.

The Medieval philosopher Avicenna had a brutally practical way of getting this point across effectively. He insisted that anyone who denied the Law of Non-Contradiction should be beaten and burned until he admitted that to be beaten is not the same as not to be beaten and to be burned is not the same as not to be burned!

The Consequence of the Law of Non-Contradiction

The consequences of the Law of Non-Contradiction are simple but forceful: opposites cannot both be true. For example,

If it is true that God exists, then it is false that God does not exist.

If theism is true, then atheism is false (and vice versa).

Likewise,

If it is true that God does not exist, then theism is false that God does exists.

If atheism is true, then theism is false.

This goes for anything else in the world. For instance,

If Christianity is true, then any view contrary to Christianity is false.

If Islam is true, then any view contrary to Islam is false.

All Views Cannot be True

In short, not all views can be true. Opposite views cannot both be true. Since different religions hold different views about God, creation, human beings, Christ, and salvation, it follows that the opposing views of various religions

cannot both be true. For example, most theists believe in life after death, and most atheists do not. Both views cannot be true. One must be false. Many religions believe in reincarnations,[7] and some do not. They cannot both be true. Some religions believe in one God (theism), and others believe in more than one god (polytheism). Both cannot be true. Also, some religions hold that God is infinite (unlimited), and others claim He is finite (limited). Again, someone is wrong.

In short, the Law of Non-Contradiction destroys the common belief in religious pluralism[8] that more than one, if not most, religions can all be true in their central beliefs. The truth is that most religions hold opposite views on very important beliefs, and opposites cannot both be true.

One Religion Could be True

It also follows from the Law of Non-Contradiction that one religion could be true. For all views cannot be false. Either God exists or He does not. And if it is false that God does not exist, then it is true that God does exists.

Also, if God exists, then either He created the world, or He did not. If it is false to say that the world is not created, then it is true to say that it is created. Further, if God exists, then He is either capable of performing miracles or He is not. If it is false that miracles do not exist, then it is true that miracles do exist.

Likewise, either the Son of God became a human being, or He did not. If it is false that He did not become human, then it is true that He did become human, and so on.

Since opposites cannot both be false, it follows that one must be true. And since different religions have opposite views on crucial beliefs about God, humans, creation, miracles, and the afterlife, then it is possible that one religion could have the truth on all these essential teachings, and thus all opposing beliefs would be false.

Other Religions Could be True on Various Things

So, if one religion is true on essential teachings, then all beliefs opposed to these truths would be false. Nonetheless, it does not follow that other religions would be false on everything. For example, many religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Confucianism) believe in some form of the Golden Rule. They could all be right on this, even though they cannot all be right on whether there is only one person in God (Islam) or three persons in God (Christianity). Clearly, someone is right and the other is wrong on this matter. Likewise, they cannot all be right on whether Jesus is God in human flesh (Christianity) or He is not (Judaism and Islam).

In other words, even if one religion were true on all the basic doctrines, nonetheless, there could be many truths in other religions on other doctrines. All the Law of Non-Contradiction demands is that if one religion is the true religion (namely, it is right on all basic doctrines), then all doctrines opposed to this from other religions are false. But it does not follow that there is no truth in other religions. All that follows is that, if religion X is true on doctrines A, B, C, and D, then anything in any other religion that is opposed to A, B, C, or D is false.

Is God Subject to the Laws of Logic?

Before we move on, a serious problem must be addressed. If there is a God (see chap. 3 below), then is He subject to the laws of logic? Or, does God transcend logic? The same question applies, if you replace the word “God” with the “Tao” or “Brahman” or “the All,” or the “Force” or for any other name for the Ultimate. For either there is a Tao or there is not.

The Laws of Logic Apply to God

Zen Buddhists[9] claim that the “Tao” goes beyond true and false, right or wrong or any such duality or distinction. Even some theists come very close to making the same claim about God, saying He transcends all the laws of creation, and logic is one of them.

However, this position is self-defeating. For to say logic does not apply to God is to make a logical (i.e., non-contradictory) statement about God. It is to make a truth claim about God (of which the opposite is false) and yet hold that no truth claims can be made about God in which the opposite is false. For even to claim that the Tao goes beyond the categories of truth and falsity is to make a truth statement about the Tao. And since the opposite of a true statement is false, then even Taoists are using the Law of Non-Contradiction to deny that this Law applies to the Tao.

Some Zen Buddhists have attempted to avoid this problem by claiming that they are not making any truth claims about God. Zen convert Alan Watts claimed that nothing in any of his many books attempting to persuade others to accept Zen is making any truth claims. When asked why he wrote all his books, he replied that birds fly and authors write! In short, he denied he made any truth claims in his books, but simply wrote because that is what authors do![10]

C. S. Lewis offered a good response to this maneuver in another context that applies equally well here:

> "You can argue with a man who says, 'Rice is unwholesome' but you neither can nor need argue with a man who says, 'Rice is unwholesome, but I'm not saying this is true.' I feel that this surrender of the claim to truth has all the air of an expedient adopted at the last moment. If [they] do not claim to know any truths, ought they not to have warned us rather earlier of the fact? For really from all the books they have written . . . one would have got the idea that they were claiming to give a true account of things. The fact surely is that they nearly always are claiming to do so. The claim is surrendered only when the question discussed . . . is pressed; and when the crisis is over the claim is tacitly resumed."[11]

In short, either they are making truth claims about the Tao, or they are not. If they are, then they are self-defeating because they claim that they are true as opposed to false (which is what they deny). If they are not, then why are they trying to persuade us by their books and lectures to accept Zen? Is not the

attempt to convert us to their view from our view a tacit claim that their view is true and ours is false? Surely, if this is not what they mean, then they should have put on the front cover of their book: “There is no truth in this book. Anyone who wants truth should look elsewhere. By buying and reading this book you are wasting your time and money.” And the fact that they did give a warning, leads us to believe that they really are trying to have their Zen cake and eat it too. Deep down, they really believe they have discovered the truth and want to persuade us of the same. But this is precisely what is self-defeating when they claim their view is true as opposed to false and yet insist that this Law of Non-contradiction does not apply to the Tao.

The same applies to some over-zealous Christians who believe that God transcends all logic. For while it is true that a theistic God goes far beyond our ability to totally comprehend Him,[12] nonetheless, the very claim that logic does not apply to God is an application of logic to God. God does not transcend logic. He embodies it. His very unchangeable nature as the ultimate rational being in the universe is the basic for logic. So, God did not create logic; He is the ultimate exemplification of it. Being a consistent, non-contradictory Being who is identical to Himself and not other than Himself, the very principles of logic are part of His rational self-identity.

Is God Subject to Logic?

If a theistic God exists, then is He subject to logic, or is logic subject to God? The best response is that logic is part of His very nature of God as a rational Being. Hence, in being subject to logic, God is subject to the laws of His own nature. Just as God as a moral being is subject to the unchangeable moral laws of His own nature (so that “it is impossible for God to lie” Heb. 6:18), even so, it is impossible for God to violate the Law of Non-contradiction. Indeed, in the name of this theistic God, in 1 Timothy 6:20, Paul speaks about “avoiding . . . contradictions” (Greek: literally, anti-theses).

It is true that all our statements about God are subject to the laws of logic (and in this sense God is subject to logic), but in so doing God is only subject to the laws of His own nature. So, in the order of our knowing, God (or better, our statements about God) are subject to logic. But in the order of being (reality), logic is subject to God since it is based in His very rational nature.

Hear the Sum of the Whole Matter

Truth is what corresponds to reality. Even the denial of this claims to correspond to reality. Furthermore, we cannot deny that we know reality without knowing something about it. Likewise, the opposite of true is false. All views cannot be true. If one view is true, then its opposite is false. Neither can all views be false. For at least one view of two opposites must be true. For example, either God exists or else He does not. And if it is false that God does not exist, then it must be true that He does exist. Likewise, it is possible that one religion is true in all its essential claims. If so, then anything in any other religion that opposed these essential truths would be false.

CHAPTER 3: THE THEISTIC GOD EXISTS

DON’T SKIP THIS CHAPTER—it is one of the most important in this book. Everything that follows depends on it. Either a theistic God exists, or He does not exist. If he does not, then atheism (non-theism) is true. And if He does, then theism is true. If theism is true, then Christianity can be true. If it is not, then Christianity cannot be true since it is a theistic religion.

WHICH GOD ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Since there are many views of God, we need to specify when we speak of God. Otherwise, we will not know which God we are talking about when we ask w whether or not He exists. Christianity is one of the Big Three theistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This theistic view of God stands in contrast to all other views of God.

Theism: One Infinite Personal God Who Created the Universe

God is a personal "He," not an impersonal "It." Likewise, either the universe existed forever alongside God, or only God existed forever. Theism affirms God is eternal, but the universe had a beginning; He created it. This is what we mean by "God," namely, a theistic God.

A theistic God is as different from the world as a painter is from a painting. God made the universe, but He is not identical to it. The painting came out of the painter's head. It is like the painter, but it is different from him. Likewise, God is the Maker, and the universe is what He made.

Many great thinkers were theists. This includes St. Augustine, St. Anselm, and St. Thomas Aquinas. In the modern world Leibniz was a theist, and a widely known theist of recent times is C. S. Lewis. Of course, all the great orthodox thinkers of the great monotheistic religions were all theists.

Deism: One Infinite Impersonal God Exists, but Miracles Do Not

There are two major differences between Theism and Deism. First, Deism is like Theism minus miracles. For a Deist God does not do miracles. The world God made runs by purely natural laws. Second, unlike a Theist, for a Deist, God does not uphold the world. He brought it into exists, but He does not hold it into existence. The universe of the Deism is self-sustaining.

Like a ball that is thrown through the air, the Deist's world keeps on

going on its own after it is brought into existence. For the Theist, by contrast, God not only brought the world into existence, He also holds it in existence. The Bible says God "upholds all things by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:3). And by Him "all things are held together" (Col. 1:17).

Some of the great Deists include Voltaire, Thomas Payne, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin. Today, however, most thinkers in this tradition have become Finite Godist.

Finite Godism: **One finite Personal God Exists Beyond the World**

In the ancient world Plato is the most famous Finite Godist. Unlike some modern examples, Plato believed that the universe was eternal and that God was not its Creator but only its Former. Modern examples of Finite Godists include John Stuart Mill and William James. A contemporary example is Rabbi Kushner.

According to Finite Godists, God is not infinite (unlimited). In fact, God is limited in power and/or perfection. This they believe follows from the fact that the world is not perfect, as it should be if an all-powerful and all-perfect God made it.

Atheism: No God Exists at All

Atheists believe there is no God, personal or impersonal, infinite or finite. There is a universe, and that is all there is. Famous atheists of the past included Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud. Two more widely known atheists of today are Richard Dawkins and Christopher Hitchens.

There are several associated views that need to be distinguished. Skeptics *doubt* that God exist. Agnostics *do not know* if God exists, and atheist *deny* that God exists. But all do not *believe* that God exists. Thus, in the broad sense of the word all of these are atheist (i.e., non-theists).

The physical universe exists, and that is all. As Carl Sagan put it, "The

Cosmos is all there is, ever was, or ever will be."[13] There has been matter in motion from the beginning. Everything else, including "mind," is either material or reducible to it.

Pantheism: God is All and All is God.

While Atheism claims that all is matter, Pantheism asserts that All is Mind (or Spirit). God is all that exists, and all that exists is God. In the ancient world Plotinus was a pantheist. Benedict Spinoza was a modern pantheist. And contemporary pantheists include Christian Scientists and many New Agers like Deepak Chopra. Many Hindus are pantheists, as are Zen Buddhists.

There are many forms of Pantheism. In the more strict forms, like Shankara Hindusim or Christian Science, evil is an illusion. So, atheism affirms evil is real, and God is not; and strict Pantheism affirms God exists, and evil does not.

Panentheism: All is in God and God is in All

Panentheism sounds like Pantheism but is not. Pantheism says God *is* All, whereas Pan*en*theism claim God is *in* All. For Panentheists God has two poles, one beyond the world (a potential pole) and one in the world (an actual pole). The actual pole is finite and constantly changing. Hence, the view is also called Process Theology.

The English philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, is the father of modern Panentheism. His student, Charles Hartshorne carried on the tradition in the United States, followed by Shubert Ogden, John Cobb, and Lewis Ford. More recently Greg Boyd and Clark Pinnock are heavily influenced by Process Theology in a view they call Open Theism (see Pinnock's, *Most Moved Mover*).

Polytheism: Many Finite Gods Exist in the World

Polytheists, in contrast to Theists, believe there are many gods, and they are all finite. Likewise, these gods did not create the world. They are in the

world, not beyond it.

In the ancient world, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans were Polytheists. In more recent times Wicca, many New Agers, and Mormons have kept the view alive.

DOES A THEISTIC GOD EXIST?

With the exception of Hinduism, which in one standard form has both one ultimate pantheist God (Brahman) and many finite personal manifestations of God, all of the above views of God are incompatible. That is, if one is true, then the others are false. For God cannot be both infinite and finite. Nor can there be only one God and yet many gods. Neither can God be both personal and impersonal. Likewise, if God exists (Theism), then atheism cannot be true.

Since Christianity is a Theistic religion, the question before us here is whether a Theistic God exists. That is, is there one personal, moral, and infinite Being beyond the universe who created the universe? Let's look at the evidence for a theistic God.

THE COSMOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

The word "cosmological" comes from "cosmos" (universe) and "logos" (reason for). It means to give a reason for the existence of the universe. There are two forms of the cosmological argument: one deals with the beginning of the universe (the horizontal argument) and the other deals with the existence of the universe right now (the vertical argument).

The Forms of the Horizontal (Kalam)[14] Argument for God

The outline of the horizontal argument for God's existence is very simple:

(1) Whatever had a beginning, had a Beginner (cause).

(2) The Universe had a beginning.

(3) Therefore, the universe had a Beginner (Cause).

The first premise is based on the fundamental principle of causality: "Everything that comes to be had a cause." For nothing comes from nothing; nothing ever could. Even the skeptic David Hume asserted, "I never asserted so

absurd a proposition as that anything might arise without a cause: I only maintained that our certainty of the falsehood of that proposition proceeded neither from intuition nor demonstration, but from another source."[15]

The second premise is supported by both scientific and rational evidence. Scientifically, the Second Law of Thermodynamics states that in a closed isolated system (such as the whole universe is) the amount of useable energy is decreasing." In short, the universe is running out of useable energy. As agnostic astrophysicists Robert Jastrow said, "Once hydrogen has been burned with that star and converted to heavier elements, it can never be restored to its original state. Minute by minute and year by year, as hydrogen is used up in starts, the supply of this element in the universe grows smaller."[16]

So, the universe is running out of useable energy. But like an hour glass where the sand is pouring from the top to the bottom, we know that if all the sand is not in the bottom, then it has not been there forever. Likewise, since the universe has not yet run out of useable energy, it follows that the universe is not eternal. It had a beginning. But everything that had a beginning, had a cause. Therefore, the universe had a Cause (God).[17] Since the Cause of the universe is beyond the finite universe, it must be not-finite (i.e., infinite). And since it is beyond the whole natural universe, then it must be supernatural. As Jastrow put it, "That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact."[18] He adds elsewhere, "the scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."[19]

There is also a philosophical argument for the beginning of the universe. It goes like this:

(1) Everything that began had a cause.

(2) The temporal universe had a beginning.

(3) Therefore, the temporal universe had a Cause (God).

Time as a series of one moment after another cannot be eternal. Why? Because an infinite series by definition never ends. But the present moment is the end of all the moments before it. Therefore, the moments before today could not have been eternal. Time must have had a beginning. But if the temporal world had a beginning, then it must have had a Cause (God).

So, both the scientific evidence and sound reason lead to an infinite supernatural Cause of the origin of the space-time universe. This is what Theism means by "God."

The Vertical Form of the Cosmological Argument for God

This argument answers the age-old question: Why is there something rather than nothing–right now? In other words, what is causing the universe to exist currently? The argument can be stated in different ways. The classical way is this:[20]

(1) Every contingent (dependent) being has a cause right now.

(2) The whole physical universe is contingent right now.

(3) Therefore, the whole physical universe has a Cause right now.

The first premise is another form of the principle of causality. For whatever is contingent (dependent) does not account for its own existence. Why? Because it is dependent in its being, and whatever is dependent in its being is dependent on something else for its being. To put it another way, whatever is contingent in its being could possibly not exist. That is, it has the potentiality for non-existence. But whatever does exist, but could possibly not exists, does not explain why it exists rather than not exists. But the whole universe could possibly not exist. Its non-existence is possible.[21] Hence, the whole universe needs a cause for its existence—right now. But the cause of a contingent being

cannot itself be a contingent being or else it too would need a cause. Hence, the Cause of the whole contingent world must be a non-contingent being, that is, a Necessary Being (God).

Another way to put this argument is in terms of the parts and the whole.

(1) Every part of the universe needs a cause.

(2) The whole is the sum of all the parts.

(3) Therefore, the whole universe needs a Cause (God).

No part of the universe is self-sustaining. Each part is dependent on something else for its existence. There are no uncaused parts, no matter what "part" is taken to mean (molecules, atoms, physical energy, or whatever). Every part of the universe is depended on something beyond it for its existence. In more scientific terms, there is no part composed of unlimited energy, energy that is not running down. According to the Second Law of Thermodynamics (above), all matter in the universe is running out of useable energy. So, every part of the universe is dependent or caused. But the whole is equal to the sum of all the parts. Hence, if every part is caused then the whole universe is caused as well.

Opponents sometimes object to this as the fallacy of composition, which argues that the whole does not always have the same characteristics as the parts. For example, a square can be made of two triangles. But each part is a triangle, and the whole is a square.

In response, theists point out that if both parts are geometric figures, then by its very nature the whole is a geometric figure. And if each tile on the floor is brown, then the whole floor is brown. It is not essential, but accidental, to triangles that adding them together does not always make a triangle. But it is essential to the very nature of a contingent part that adding up the whole pile of them does not equal a Necessary Being. No matter how many contingent parts there are in the whole, the whole sum of them is still contingent.

One way to understand this is to ask a simple question: if all the parts of the universe are taken away, would there be anything left? If not, then the whole universe is equal to the sum of all its parts and, therefore, it is caused. If they say, yes something is left when all the parts are gone, then it must be something more than the contingent, temporal, or caused universe. It must be a transcendent, necessary, eternal, and uncaused Being on which every part of the universe is dependent for its existence! But this is what theists mean by a theistic "God." So, either way (whether the parts are equal to the whole or not), every part in the universe needs a cause (God) and so does the whole universe.

Some theist have offered another brief argument for God. It goes like this:

(1) Something exists (e.g., I do).

(2) But nothing cannot cause something.

(3) Therefore, an eternal and necessary Being exists (God).

It must be eternal since if ever there were nothing, then there would always be nothing since nothing cannot cause something. It must be necessary since all beings cannot be contingent (dependent). There must be a necessary Being on which they depend for their existence. Hence, since I undeniably exists, it follows that there must be an eternal necessary Being that exist as a ground for my existence (and anything else that may exist).[22]

THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS FOR GOD'S EXISTENCE

The Greek word "*telos*" means end, purpose, or design. Reasoning from design is called the Teleological Argument for God. It has many forms, but the most recent scientific evidence for it comes from two main sources.

The Anthropic Principle

One of the most important scientific discoveries in modern time is the Anthropic Principle (From the Greek word *anthropos*, meaning human being). According to this principle from the very inception of the universe it was fine-tuned or tweaked for the eventual emergence of human life.[23] There are well over one hundred factors[24] that must be in perfect balance in order for human life as we know it to exist. A sampling of those factors are:

> 21% of oxygen in the air is just right for life (more and we would burn up, and less we would suffocate);
> the sun is just the right distance from the earth (closer and we would burn up, and farther we would freeze);
> the tilt of the earth is just right for life (otherwise it would get to cold at night and too hot in the day);
> the gravitational force is just right to make movement possible but to keep us from flying off into space);
> the position of Jupiter is just right to protect the earth from cosmic bodies destroying us;
> the nuclear force is just right to hold the atoms together

Astronomer Robert Jastrow summed up the situation well when he wrote, "The anthropic principle is the most interesting next to the proof of the creation, and it is even more interesting because it seems to say that science itself has proven, as a hard fact, that this universe was made, was designed, for man to live in. *It is a very theistic result*."[25]

Why is it a theistic result? Because it points to a theistic God beyond the whole universe who planned the emergence of human life before the universe and tweaked it just right from the very beginning to make it possible. The form of the argument can be put like this:

(1) Advanced planning is a sign of an intelligent cause.

(2) The whole universe shows evidence of advanced planning.

(3) Hence, the whole universe was planned by an Intelligent Cause (God).[26]

When contemplating the nature of the physical laws of the universe alone, the great Albert Einstein said, "The harmony of natural law . . . reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection."[27] Likewise, former atheist and astronomer Alan Sandage, said, "As I said before, the world is too complicated in all of its parts to be due to chance alone. I am convinced that the existence of life with all its order in each of its organisms is simply too well put together. . . . The more one learns of biochemistry the more unbelievable it becomes unless there is some kind of organizing principle—an architect for believers. . . ."[28]

Scientist Michael Behe summarized the evidence well. What we have is "a planet in the right regions of a solar system, in the right region of a galaxy, in a universe with the right kind of laws to produce chemicals with the right kind of properties—This is all necessary for life, but still very far from sufficient. The planet itself has to be not too big and not too small, with enough but not too much water, the right kind of minerals in the right place. . . . All are critical. If any one of them were missing, intelligent life would be precluded."[29] But the critical prearrangement of so many parts all conspiring together for the same end is always a sign of intelligent design. We never observe natural laws doing that kind of thing.

The Teleological Argument from Microbiology

In Darwin's day a living cell was considered a "black box" since they did not have microscopes capable of seeing into the cell's secrets. In a book title's *Darwin's Black Box*, microbiologist Michael Behe started a design revolution. After narrating the incredible evidence for the incredible complexity of a living cell, Behe concluded, "The conclusion of intelligent design flows naturally from the data itself—not from sacred books or sectarian beliefs. Inferring that biochemical systems were designed by an intelligent agent is a humdrum process that requires no new principles of logic or science." So, "life on earth at its most

fundamental level, in its most critical components, is the product of intelligent activity."[30] In a more recent book, Behe updates his argument, showing that life is even more complex than first thought.[31]

Even atheist Nobel Laureate, Francis Crick, admitted, “An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have to have been satisfied to get it going.”[32]

Indeed, former atheist, Sir Fred Hoyle, stated the matter this way: "Biochemical systems are exceedingly complex, so much so that the chance of their being formed through random shuffling of simple organic molecules is exceedingly minute, to a point indeed where it is insensibly different from zero." So, there must be "an intelligence, which designed the biochemicals and gave rise to the origin of carbonaceous life."[33]

Even the atheistic, evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins admitted that life appears to have been designed and that an origin one-celled animal has a thousand sets of Encyclopedias full of genetic information in it![34] But where could all this complex information have come from, except from an intelligent designer of first life.

The Biological Argument from Specified Complexity

Life is unique. It has what scientists call “specified complexity.” Crystals are specified but not complex, having only a simple message repeated over and over. Random polymers are complex but not specified, carrying no real message at all. Only life is both specified and complex. Claude Shannon developed an information theory for Bell Labs, which shows that the information carrying letters have a certain letter frequency. Herbert Yockey applied this to the DNA in living cells and discovered that there is a mathematical identity between the letter sequence in a DNA and that of a human language. He wrote, “The sequence hypothesis applies directly to the protein and the genetic text as well as

to written languages and therefore the treatment is mathematically identical."[35] This leads to the following argument:

> (1) Wherever we observe specified complexity in the present (such as in human language), it is caused by an intelligent cause.[36]
>
> (2) The specified complexity in a living cell is mathematically identical to that in a human language.
>
> (3) Therefore, first life must have had an intelligent cause.

It is important to notice that it is not the *absence* of a natural cause that leads to this conclusion. It is the *presence* of evidence for a intelligent cause that does it. So, positing an intelligent cause of first life is not the "God-of-the-gap" fallacy. For example, it is not the lack of known natural causes that leads us to posit an intelligent cause of the faces on Mt. Rushmore or a sand castle on the beach. Rather, it is known evidence for an intelligent cause from previous experience that lead to the conclusion of an intelligent cause first life. In the 1997 film *Contact*, which Carl Sagan conceived the idea of, Carl Sagan and the SETI (Search for extra-terrestrial intelligence) program depict scientists who were elated when they received one message (all prime numbers from 1 to 100) through their radio telescope. As Sagan put it, "the receipt of a single message from outer space would show that it is possible to live through such technological adolescence"[37] because it would have proven there was an intelligent civilization out there. Ironically, the same Sagan said elsewhere that the human brain is so complex that it has 20 million volumes full of genetic information in it. Sagan wrote, "The neuro-chemistry of the brain is astonishingly busy, the circuitry of a machine more wonderful than any devised by humans."[38] If so, and if it takes an intelligent being to form one simple message, how much greater Mind did it take to create the human brain with the equivalent of the Library of Congress in it!

After reviewing the scientific evidence for God, the most notorious former atheists of modern times, Antony Flew, concluded: "Those scientists who

point to the Mind of God do not merely advance a series of arguments or a process of syllogistic reasoning. Rather, they propound a vision of reality that emerges from the conceptual heart of modern science and imposes itself on the rational mind. It is a vision that I personally find compelling and irrefutable." [39]

THE MORAL ARGUMENT

In addition to the cosmological arguments that points to an infinite supernatural cause of the universe and the teleological argument which shows that this Cause is also a super-intelligent being, the moral argument reveals a God who is morally perfect. It takes the following form:

(1) Every moral law has a moral law Giver.

(2) There is an objective moral law.

(3) Therefore, there must be an objective Moral Law Giver.

The most famous form of this argument was stated by C. S. Lewis.[40] The first premise is self-evident. Laws have law-givers, and prescriptions have prescribers. The burden of proof rests on the second premise. What is the evidence that there is an objective moral law, not just something subjective or human. Strangely enough, atheists themselves have provided the evidence for a moral law—evidence so strong that it has converted many of them to belief that there is a Moral Law Giver (God).

As a former atheist, C. S. Lewis believed that the evil and injustices in the world eliminated God. But then he asked himself:

> Just how had I got this idea of *just* and *unjust*? A man does not call a line crooked unless he has some idea of a straight line. What was I comparing this universe with when I called it unjust. . . . Of course I could have given

> up my idea of justice by saying it was nothing but a private idea of my own. But if I did that, then my argument against God collapsed too—for the argument depended on saying that the world was really unjust, not simply that it did not happen to please my private fancies. Thus in the very act of trying to prove that God did not exist—in other words, that the whole of reality was senseless—I found I was forced to assume that one part of reality—namely my idea of justice—was full of sense.[41]

Lewis is not the only atheist who came this route. Former atheist Jay Budziszewski of the University of Texas came to God the same way. He reasoned, "What actually led me back was a growing intuition that my condition was objectively evil…. Evil is deficiency in good; there is no such thing as an evil 'substance,' an evil-in-itself. So if my condition really was evil, there had to be some good of which my condition was the ruination." In short, we cannot know evil except on the backdrop of good. If evil is real, then there must be an objective standard by which we know that.[42]

Even former atheists and now famous scientist and head of the human genome project, Dr. Francis Collins, was impressed with the moral argument on his way back to God. He later wrote, "After twenty-eight years as a believer, the Moral Law still stands out for me as the strongest signpost to God. More than that, it points to a God who cares about human beings, and a God who is infinitely good and holy."[43]

There are many reasons there must be an objective moral law:

1. We would not know there was injustice unless there were an objective standard of Justice.
2. True progress is not possible unless we know an objective standard by which we measure that.
3. Things are getting better or worse.
4. Real moral disagreements are not possible without an objective moral standard.
5. The same basic moral codes are found in most cultures.[44]

6. Guilt from breaking a moral law would not be universal if there were no objective moral law.

7. Even those who deny moral absolutes have moral principles they believe are universal such as tolerance, freedom of expression, and the wrongness of bigotry and genocide.

8. We did not invent the moral law any more than we invented mathematical or physical laws. They are discovered, not created.

9. We sometimes chose duty to save a drowning person over instinct not to risk our own life.

10. The basic moral law is discovered, not by how we behave, but by how we desire others to behave toward us.

11. Acts of altruism cannot be adequately explained naturalistically.

I know of a student who turned in a well-documented, well-researched term paper in which he claimed he was a moral relativist. The professor graded his paper with a failing grade, and marked the paper with these words: "F! I DON'T LIKE BLUE FOLDERS!" The student sharply complained to the professor that it was unjust, unfair, and simply not right to give him an "F" simply because of the color of the folder. And the student was right in his protest. But he was right only because he was wrong in his paper. For every student knows that there is an objective moral principle that says it is wrong to give a student an "F" because of the color of the folder and not based on the content of the paper.

THE ARGUMENT FROM RELIGIOUS NEED

Another reason for God is worth mentioning here. It goes like this:

(1) All persons need God.

(2) What we really need, really exists.

(3) Therefore, God really exists.

Most people acknowledge their need for God. But what is not widely known is that so do most atheists feel a need for God. They simply do not believe it is based in reality. Sigmund Freud[45] said it was an illusion and Ludwig Feurerbach[46] claimed it was just a projection of human imagination. But both of these miss the point, namely, that the need for God is a *real need*, not a *mere wish*. Look at the evidence. As former atheist scientist Francis Collins put it, "Why would such a universal and uniquely human hunger exists, if it were not connected to some opportunity for fulfillment?"[47] He added, "Creatures are not born with desires unless satisfaction for those desires exists. A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex."[48] Why do we have a God-shaped vacuum in our hearts unless it is mean to be filled with God?

An illusion is a mere wish—like the belief that there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow! But the need for God is not a mere wish, any more than a person's need for water is. True, not everyone will get the water or food he needs. But this does not mean there is no food or water anywhere. Likewise, not everyone will find God, but this does not mean there is not God anywhere. Listen to the hunger for God, even among those who do not believe in God:

> Bertand Russell**:** "Even when one feels nearest to other people, something in one seems obstinately to belong to God …—at least that is how I should express it if I thought there was a God. It is odd, isn't it? I care passionately for this world and many things and people in it, and yet … what is it all? There must be something more important one feels, though I don't believe there is."[49]
>
> Eric Fromm: "The need for … an object of devotion is deeply rooted in the conditions of human existence."[50]
>
> Ludwig Feurerbach: "God is a need of the intelligence, a necessary thought—the highest degree of the thinking power."[51]

Jean Paul Sartre**:** "I needed God … I reached out for religion, I longed for it, it was the remedy. Had it been denied me, I would have invented it myself."[52]

Friedrich Nietzsche**:** "What wilt thou, unknown-god? … To the last of all that are lonely, Oh, come back! … And my heart's final flame—Flares up for thee! Oh, come back, My unknown god!"[53]

Albert Camus: "Nothing can discourage the appetite for divinity in the heart of man."[54]

Saint Augustine: This former skeptic confessed: "Thou hast formed us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they find rest in Thee."[55] If all men need God, including atheists, then it is unreasonable to conclude there is no God anywhere simply because some people do not find Him.

You Can Lead a Horse to the Water, But. . . .

If there are good reasons to believe God exists, then why do atheists reject God? One former atheist put it this way: "Because the presence of God made me more and more uncomfortable, I began looking for reasons to believe that He didn't exist. It's a funny thing about us human beings: not many of us doubt God's existence and then start sinning. Most of us sin and then start doubting God's existence."[56] Nietzsche revealed that his problem was not a matter of the mind but of the will when he wrote, "If one could prove this God of the Christians to us, we should be even less able to believe in him."[57] As for scientists who see the scientific evidence for God and still reject Him, Robert Jastrow put his finger on their pulse when he wrote, "There is a kind of religion in Science. It is a religion of a person who believes . . . there is no first cause. . . . This religious faith of the scientists is violated by the discovery that the world had a beginning. . . . When that happens, the scientists has lost control."[58] Harvard Atheists, Richard Lewontin, was honest when he said, "We take the side of [naturalistic] science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs . . . because we have a prior commitment to materialism." He adds, "Moreover that materialism is absolute for we cannot allow a divine foot in the door."[59]

ANSWERING SOME IMPORTANT OBJECTIONS

This is not to say that atheists do not give objections to belief in God, but only to say that they offer no rationally valid ones. In truth, many of their objections are worn-out and retreaded.

Objection One: If everything needs a cause, then so does God. If God does not need a cause, then neither does the universe.

Response: This is a misstatement of the principle of causality. The theist does not argue that "*Everything* needs a cause." Only *effects* need causes. Only finite, contingent, things that have a beginning need a cause since they do not explain why they exist when they need not exist. Hence, the universe of finite; contingent things need a cause. But God does not have a beginning, nor is He finite. So, He does not need a cause. But the universe is finite, contingent, and had a beginning. Therefore, the universe needs a cause, but God does not.

Objection Two: An endless series of causes is possible. Hence, there is no First Cause (God).

Response: An endless series of causes before today is not possible for two reasons. First, there cannot be an endless series of any finite things before today because an infinite (endless) series has no end. But today is the end of all days leading up to today. Hence, there cannot be an infinite number of causes before today. Of course, there can be an infinite number of *abstract points* between A and B. But abstract points are not *concrete things*. Thus, there are an infinite number of abstract points between the two ends of a book shelf. But one cannot get an infinite number of actual books there, no matter how thin they are. So, an infinite number of real causes is impossible.

Second, in every series of essential causes, every cause is being caused. Otherwise, there would be an uncaused cause (God) which the series is

trying to avoid. Further, in every such series of causes of being at least one cause is causing. Otherwise there would be no causality in the series. But in this case, this one cause would be causing itself (since it is both causing and being caused), which is impossible. A cause is prior in being to its effect, but no cause can be prior in being to itself actually of logically.

Objection Three: Assuming God is like intelligent causes in the present does not lead to a theistic God, but to a human like cause or causes, which are the only kind of causes we see producing these kinds of things in the present.

Response: The principle of uniformity (which is based on knowing the kind of cause that produces something in the present) does not demand an *identical* cause in the past but only a *similar* one to what we observe in the present. The SETI (Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence) program did not demand the extraterrestrials were the same as humans but only that there intelligence was similar to ours. Further, the cause does not have to be similar in any bodily way but only in that it has intelligence like human intelligence. Finally, a Creator cannot be the same as a creature. The Creator is infinite (unlimited) and the creature is finite (limited). Hence, attributing a body or bodily parts (all of which are limited) to the Creator is unjustified.

Objection Four: The arguments given for God do not prove that there is only one God, as theist claim there is.

Response: There can only be one God according to these arguments for many reasons. First, the God of the Cosmological argument is infinite[60]since every finite thing needs a cause. And there cannot be two infinite Beings. For in order for there to be two beings of the same kind, they would have to differ. But two infinite Beings do not differ; they are the same kind of Being, namely, infinite. Second, the theistic God (of the

> Moral Argument) is absolutely perfect. But there cannot be two absolutely perfect beings. For to be different one would have to have a perfection the other did not have. And the one that lacked that perfection would not be absolutely perfect. Hence, there can be only one absolutely perfect being. Third, the teleological argument (according to the Anthropic Principle) shows there was one Mind behind the whole universe doing the preplanning of the whole thing. Finally, there is only one set of physical laws in the whole universe which reflects one Mind behind it all. It is a uni-verse (one world from one Mind) not a multi-verse (many worlds from many minds).

Some Final Thoughts

The various arguments for God show that there is only one God, not many. This God must be infinite since He is beyond the finite world He made. Further, He must be personal because He is both intelligent and moral, being the Intelligent Designer and the Moral Law Giver. Further, this God is spiritual and supernatural since He is beyond the physical and natural world. He can do miracles because He has already done the greatest miracle of all—He has created the world. Thus, the evidence points to the existence of a Theistic God—one that is infinite, intelligent, perfect, personal, and supernatural. As even agnostic astronomer Robert Jastrow put it:

> The scientist's pursuit of the past ends in the moment of creation. This is an exceedingly strange development, unexpected by all but theologians. They have always accepted the word of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."[61]

In short, science ends where the Bible begins.

CHAPTER 4: MIRACLES ARE POSSIBLE

SINCE A THEISTIC GOD EXISTS (see chapter 3), then miracles are possible. Why? Because He created the world which is the biggest miracle of all. For if the world had a beginning, then God brought it into existence out of nothing—which is the biggest miracle possible. Thus, if a theistic God exists, not only are miracles possible, but the biggest miracle of all—making something from nothing—has already occurred. Making wine from water (as Jesus did in John 2) is no problem for a God who can make water from nothing! Therefore, all the arguments that support the existence of a theistic God support the possibility (and actuality) of a supernatural act.

Further, since this theistic God still exists, it follows that miracles are still possible. There is no way to lock a theistic God out of His universe. An all-powerful God can do anything that is not actually impossible. And it is not actually impossible to occasionally intervene in the usual course of events (which is what natural laws are) with an unusual event (which is what a miracle is). However, miracles are not merely unusual. They are supernatural. They are an unusual intervention into the natural world by a supernatural God.

ALL THAT GLITTERS IS NOT GOLD

Of course, not everything that is unusual is not supernatural. There are at least several other kinds of events that have been mistakenly identified as miracles but are not.[62]

(1) *An Anomaly*

An unusual event with an unknown or poorly understood natural causes (like life growing around thermo-vents on the ocean floor where it was previously assumed to be too hot, dark, pressurized, and poisonous for life to exist).

(2) *A Psychosomatic event*

An unusual event with a known mental cause (like a placebo effect that seems to lead to the cure of a physical ailment).

(3) *A "Providential occurrence"*

An unusual beneficial event from a known natural cause (like the fog that enabled Washington's troops to cross the Delaware and be safe from the enemy British troops).

(4) *A Magic trick*

An unusual event but a natural cause that tricks the eyes or the mind (like pulling a rabbit out of a hat).[63]

All of these are produced by natural or mental causes. None is truly supernatural. But a truly supernatural cause has the "fingerprints" of God on it. There are some things that only God can do. For example, only God can create life (Deut. 32:39; Job 1:21). The magicians of Egypt were able to copy some of Moses' miracles by magic, but when he created life from dust, they cried out, "This is the finger of God!" (Exod. 8:19). Likewise, only God can raise the dead (John 11). Also, only God can produce a new thing instantaneously, such as an

instant cure of a blind man (John 9), or turning water into wine (John 2). This is why so many of the miracles of Jesus and of His disciples are said to have been done “immediately” (Mat. 8:3; 20:34; Mark. 2:12; Acts 3:7). Indeed, even Darwinists admit that if a change from one form of life to another occurs immediately and not gradually, then it would be a miracle.[64]

There are other characteristics of a miracle such as the sign of intelligent intervention. Since God is a super-intelligence, if an event in the natural world occurs with signs of a super-intelligent cause, like the sudden appearance of life (see chapter 3) or of a new form of life, then that would be an indication of a supernatural cause. Finally, since God is morally perfect (see chapter 3), one can expect that moral purposes of doing good would be associated with His actions.

There are several words associated with miracles in the New Testament which reveal the presence of the Divine hand. As a “wonder” they were unusual events that drew attention to them. As a “power” they had a supernatural source in the divine will. As a “sign” they were used to confirm a message from God (Heb. 2:3-4). In brief, miracles were an act of God to confirm the Word of God to the people of God. As such, they had the following characteristics.

First, miracles have an *unusual character*. It is an out-of-the-ordinary event in contrast to the regular pattern of events in the natural world. As a “wonder,” it attracts attention by its uniqueness. A burning bush that is not consumed, fire from heaven, and a person walking on water are not normal occurrences. Hence, they draw the interest of observers.

Second, miracles have a *theological dimension*. A miracle is an act of God that presupposes a God who acts. The view that a God beyond the universe created it, controls it, and can interfere in it is called *theism* (see chapter 3).

Third, miracles have a *moral dimension*. They bring glory to God by manifesting His moral character. Miracles are visible acts that reflect the invisible nature of God. No true miracle, then, is evil, because God is good.

Miracles by nature aim to produce and/or promote good.

Fourth, miracles have a *doctrinal dimension*. Miracles in the Bible are connected directly or indirectly with "truth claims." (See chapter 5 below). They are ways to tell a true prophet from a false prophet (Deut. 18:22). They confirm the truth of God through the servant of God (Heb. 2:3–4). Message and miracle go hand-in-hand.

Fifth, miracles have a *teleological dimension*. Unlike magic, miracles are never performed to entertain. Herod's curiosity prompted him to want to see a miracle, but Jesus refused to do one (see Luke 23:8 cf. Mat. 12:39). Miracles have the distinctive purpose to glorify the Creator and to provide evidence for people to believe by accrediting the message of God through the prophet of God.

THE POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES

Now that miracles have been defined, we can inquire as to whether they are possible. The answer lies in the previous chapter. If God exists, then miracles are possible. Why? Because they are a supernatural act of God, and supernatural acts can exist only where there is a supernatural Being who can so act. As C. S. Lewis aptly stated, “But if we admit God, must we admit miracles? Indeed, indeed, you have no security against it. That is the bargain.”[65]

After all, if God created the world (see chapter 3), then the biggest miracle has already occurred—making something from nothing. Other miracles in the Bible are making something from something. If God can make water from nothing, then He has no problem in making wine from water. Likewise, if God can make matter from nothing, then multiplying loaves is just making matter from matter.

In fact, many of Jesus’ miracles were just doing instantaneously (one of the signs of a divine action) what normally happens gradually in nature. For example, normally water goes into the ground, up through the root into the grape vine, and into the grape. What Jesus did when He turned water into wine was to speed up the process. The same is true of multiply loaves. Wheat produces more wheat naturally. Again, what Jesus did was to speed up the process when He multiplied loaves. Even the cursing of the fig tree did quickly what the tree was ultimately going to do gradually, namely, wither away.

This is the heart of the debate between Darwinists and creationists. Gradualness is a sign of natural evolution. But suddenness would be a sign of creation. This being the case, then the previous chapter showed that creations has occurred at two points. First, when God made something from nothing at the creation of matter it had to be a miracle since it was sudden and abrupt—and with no previous material. Second, when first life appeared from non-life, it too came suddenly. Even atheists Francis Crick admitted it was like a “miracle.”[66]

The very words “spontaneous generation” reveal its miraculous nature. There was non-life, and suddenly there was life with no intermediate gradual steps between non-life and first life.

So, as far as the evidence goes (see chapter 3), miracles have already happened at two points: the creation of matter and the creation of first life. There are no natural explanations for either event.[67]

ARE MORE MIRACLES POSSIBLE?

As long as God exists, miracles are possible. And as long as the big miracles have been shown to have occurred, there is no reason to believe that smaller ones cannot occur. So science had shown that miracles are possible (and actual); only history can tell us whether any more have occurred since. But this we know in advance of looking at the evidence: If God can create life, then He can raise the dead. Resurrections are no problem for the Creator of life (see chapter 8). And even the skeptic David Hume admitted that a resurrection from the dead would be a miracle.[68]

If this is so, then why is the modern mind so set against miracles? The answer in two words is David Hume (d. 1776). His arguments against miracles have dominated the intellectual scene for more than the last two hundred years. Hume's argument can be put in two forms. Let's examine the stronger form first.

HUME'S ARGUMENT AGAINST THE POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES (HARD FORM)

Hume launched his attack on miracles with the comment, "I flatter myself that I have discovered an argument . . . which, if just, will, with the wise and learned, be an everlasting check to all kinds of superstitious delusion, and consequently will be useful as long as the world endures.[69] Hume's reasoning goes like this:

(1) A miracle by definition violates the laws of nature

(2) The laws of nature have been established by "firm and unalterable experience."

(3) Therefore, "the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined."

Hume wrote, "There must, therefore, be a uniform experience against every miraculous event. Otherwise the event would not merit that appellation."[70] So "nothing is esteemed a miracle if it ever happened in the

common course of nature."[71]

A Response to Hume's Hard Argument Against Miracles

In this form of his argument, Hume clearly begs the question by simply defining miracles as impossible. For if miracles are a "violation" of what cannot be "altered," then miracles are by that very fact impossible. Hume's "uniform" experience either begs the question or is special pleading. It begs the question if Hume presumes to know the experience is uniform *in advance* of the evidence. How can one know that all *possible* experience will confirm naturalism, without access to all possible experiences, past, present, and future? If, on the other hand, Hume simply means by "uniform" experience the select experiences of *some* persons (who have not encountered a miracle), this is special pleading. Others claim to have experienced miracles. As Stanley Jaki observes, "Insofar as he was a sensationist or empiricist philosopher he had to grant equal credibility to the recognition of any fact, usual or unusual."[72]

C. S. Lewis's observation is to the point, "Now of course we must agree with Hume that if there is absolutely "uniform experience" against miracles, if in other words they have never happened, why then they never have. Unfortunately we know the experience against them to be uniform only if we know that all the reports of them are false. And we can know all the reports to be false only if we know already that miracles have never occurred. In fact, we are arguing in a circle."[73]

HUME'S ARGUMENT AGAINST CREDIBILITY OF MIRACLES (SOFT FORM)

Giving Hume the benefit of the doubt, his argument can be put in a softer form that is, nevertheless, still effective. It is not an argument for the *impossibility* of miracles, but for their *incredibility*:

(1) A miracle is by definition a rare occurrence.

(2) Natural law is by definition a description of regular occurrence.

(3) The evidence for the regular is always greater than that for the rare.

(4) Wise individuals always base their belief on the greater evidence.

(5) Therefore, wise individuals should never believe in miracles.

Notice that this "soft" form of the argument does not rule miracles out of the question; they are simply held to be incredible by the nature of the evidence. Wise people do not claim that miracles cannot occur; they should simply *never believe* they happen.

In this "soft" interpretation of the argument, miracles are still eliminated, since by the *very nature of the case* no thoughtful person should ever hold that a miracle has indeed occurred. If this is so, Hume has seemingly avoided begging the question and yet has successfully eliminated the possibility of reasonable belief in miracles. Variations of these arguments are still held to be valid by some widely respected contemporary philosophers.[74]

AN EVALUATION OF HUME'S ARGUMENT AGAINST THE CREDIBILITY OF MIRACLES.

In this form of the argument the crucial premise is number 3: the evidence for the regular is always greater than that for the rare. This is clearly false and can be shown to be such by counter example from Hume's own naturalistic world view. For there are many examples where the naturalist believes the evidence is greater for a singular event than for a regular event.

1. The Origin of the Universe was a Singular Event. As shown earlier (in chapter 3), the space-time physical universe is not eternal. It had a beginning and, according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, it has been running down ever since. Most astrophysicists believe it all began with a Big Bang, and they use several other lines of evidence to support their view: an expanding universe, a radiation echo, Einstein's general theory of relativity, and the large mass of energy discovered by the Hubble

space telescope. So according to their own reasoning, the universe banged into existence out of nothing only once, and it has never happened again. This is the very definition of a singular event to which, they claim, multiply lines of evidence point. Yet this singularity did happen. But by Hume's criteria a wise person should never believe this happened since it has not been repeated over and over.

2. The Origin of Life Was a Singular Event. There is a second singularity that all naturalistic scientists believe did happen. Some have even used the word "miracle" for it, namely, the spontaneous generation of first life. All such scientists believe that life came from non-life once in the past, and we have no evidence since that it is repeating. In fact Redi and Pasteur are given credit for proving that life does not occur from non-life by spontaneous generation. And naturalistic scientists believe that the evidence points to this one-time event occurring in the distant past and not recurring since, so far as we can observe. But according to Hume, who was a naturalist himself, no wise person should ever believe in spontaneous generation of first life. Yet, according to their own belief, it did happen.

3. Macro-Evolution is a Singular Happening. All naturalistic scientists believe in some form of macro-evolution, namely that all life evolved from a common ancestor over a long period of time by natural means without any supernatural intervention. Many evolutionists even refer to macro-evolution as a "fact." Yet macro-evolution has never been repeated either in nature or in the laboratory. It is an unrepeated singularity to which they believe all the evidence points. But, again (even to the point of calling it a "fact"), according to Hume's argument against miracles, no wise person should ever believe any such singularity. Clearly, Hume's argument against miracles is hanged on its own gallows.

There are other problems with Hume's argument worth mentioning. One is that–

4. Hume's Argument Proves Too Much. It proves that even if a miracle did happen, the wise person should not believe it! For on the second form of the argument, Hume does not eliminate the *possibility* of a miracle occurring. He simply argues against the *credibility* of believing that one has happened. So, if a miracle did in fact happen, then according to Hume's reason, no wise person should believe it did. Now there is clearly something wrong with an argument that says, "Even if an event did as a matter of fact actually happen, nonetheless, you should not believe that it did!" One is inclined to say, "Too much skepticism has made thee mad!"

5. Hume's View Would Eliminate the History of Napoleon. The irony of Hume's skepticism is that it would have eliminated one of his own occupations. He was also a historian. He wrote a history of England. As a historian Hume was well aware of singular events from the past. The life of Napoleon was filled with them. This led Richard Whately to write a book titled *Historical Doubts Concerning the History of Napoleon Bonaparte* in which he satirizes Hume's view, demonstrating that by Hume's criteria of not believing unusual events, no one should believe in the history of Napoleon. Since Napoleon's exploits were so fantastic, so extraordinary, so unprecedented, no intelligent person should believe that these events ever happened. After recounting Napoleon's amazing and unparalleled military feats, Whately wrote, "Does anyone believe all this and yet refuse to believe a miracle? Or rather, what is this but a miracle? Is not this a violation of the laws of nature?" If the skeptic does not deny the existence of Napoleon, he "must at least acknowledge that they do not apply to that question the same plan of reasoning which they have made use of in others."[75]

6. Hume *Added* Evidence Rather Than *Weighing* It At the basis of Hume's argument is a fundamental mistake: he added evidence rather than weighing evidence. In short, he confused evidence and probability. More

precisely, he added evidence for past natural events, rather than weighing the evidence for a current supernatural event. For example, it is irrelevant to whether Jesus rose from the dead to add up all the people before Him who did not rise from the dead. The only thing that is relevant is whether there is evidence that Jesus in fact died and then a few days later came back to life again (see chapter 8 below). *Adding* all the past evidence of people who died and did not come back is irrelevant. The only thing that counts is *weighing* the available evidence as to whether He did come back to life again. By Hume's logic no new invention or medical advance would ever be accepted since no one in the past had it. Hume recognized the fallacy of this reasoning elsewhere when he admitted that, based on past conformity, nothing can be known as true concerning the future. He said, we cannot even know for sure that the sun will rise tomorrow morning.[76] Hence, for Hume to deny future miracles based on past experience is inconsistent with his own principles.

A SCIENTIFIC OBJECTION TO MIRACLES

Before we conclude this chapter on the possibility of miracles, two more objections should be considered. First, methodological naturalism[77] argues that a miracle is a violation of the scientific procedure. For it is argued that no event is immune to scientific analysis. Allowing for miracles is like putting up a "No Trespassing" sign on an event. But science cannot be locked out of the natural world. Anything that occurs in the natural world is subject to natural scrutiny. So, allowing for the miraculous would bring science to a halt.

Response to this Scientific Objection

In response, several things should be pointed out. First of all, if the premise behind this is taken to mean "all events in the natural world must have natural causes," then it simply begs the question in favor of naturalism. Science should be open to whatever the cause might be. To prejudge every event in

advance by insisting they must have a natural cause does not reflect an open-minded inquiry that a scientist should have.

Second, modern science has recognized a singularity (in the origin of the universe) that has no natural cause since even agnostic astronomer Robert Jastrow called the cause "supernatural." And as for the origin of first life, even atheist scientist Francis Crick used the word "miracle" of it.

Third, miracles do not bar scientific inquiry in the empirical sense for such inquiry is based on regular events, and a miracle by definition is not a regular event. So, science has every right to seek a natural cause for every event that is part of a regular pattern of nature. Thus, to assume there is a supernatural cause for some regular event is a "God-of-the-gap" fallacy. Newton was wrong when he invoked God to explain patterns in the regular course of nature. And so are any other attempts to do the same thing. But singular events, such as miracles, are not part of any regular pattern of nature. Hence, they are not the object of empirical scientific enquiry.[78]

Fourth, this so-called "scientific" argument against miracles fails to remember that not all events have natural causes. Intelligent causes have always been a legitimate part of scientific enquiry, as is evidenced from archaeology, cryptology, forensic science, information theory, and the SETI program. All of these deal with singular events which allow that they may be caused by an intelligent being. Since a miracle, like one of these events, has an intelligent cause, it should be examined on the same basis, namely, examining the evidence to see if there are signs of an intelligent cause. But to rule out an intelligent cause of a dead person coming back to life (resurrection) in advance of looking at the evidence is contrary to the principles of this kind of science. This is particularly so since we know (as was shown in chapter 3) that there is a supernatural God who can perform these kinds of supernatural events.

THE HISTORICAL OBJECTION TO MIRACLES

The principle of analogy was laid down by Ernst (c. A.D. 1865—1923) [79] for the study of the past. It posits that the past can only be known in terms of the present. Thus, since no miracles are occurring in the present, it insists that we have no basis for positing any in the past. On this principle, some argue that the miracles of the Bible should not be believed since they do not relate to anything happening now. Thus, a proper historical method eliminates the miraculous.

It is widely admitted on both sides of the debate that virgin births, raising the dead, and walking on water are not occurring today. If so, then it would follow by the principle of analogy that such events cannot be known to have happened in history. So by this principle biblical miracles would be historically unknowable.

Antony Flew stated the principle this way:[80] (1) all critical history depends on the validity of two principles: (a) the remains of the past can be used as evidence for reconstructing history only if we presume the same basic regularities of nature held then as now; (b) the critical historian must use today's knowledge of the possible and probable as criteria for knowing the past. (2) But belief in miracles is contrary to both these principles. (3)Therefore, belief in miracles is contrary to critical history. If so, then only the naïve and uncritical persons can believe in miracles. The past can be known only in terms of the regular patterns of the present. And these patterns of nature in the present rule out any knowledge of miracles in the past.

Response to the Historical Argument Against Miracles

First of all, it should be noted that this argument does not claim to eliminate the possibility of miracles. It simply attempts to rule out their *knowability* by what is called "critical history." It does not deny the *possibility* of miracles.

Second, the argument confuses the principle of uniformity (the present is

the key to the past) and uniformitarianism (all present and past events have natural causes). Not only is there no justification for uniformitarianism, but it begs the question in favor of naturalism. Further, it is contrary to scientific inquiry, which has always allowed for intelligent causes of certain kinds of events (for example, archaeology and cryptology).

Third, it is contrary to the valid principle of uniformity, which posits that the present is the key to the past and that the kinds of causes we observe producing certain kinds of events in the present should be assumed to produce similar events in the past. For example, present repeated observation informs us that arrowheads are produced by intelligent beings. So, if we find one buried from the past, we should assume it too had an intelligent cause. Likewise, if we repeatedly see sculptors producing sculptures in the present, then similar sculptures found from the past should also be assumed to have had an intelligent cause. In like manner, if we know from repeated observation in the present that inscriptions are produced by intelligent beings, then likewise ones dug up from the past should also be given an intelligent cause. And by the same logic, if we see that the specified complexity in a human language is always produced by an intelligent being in the present, then when the same kind of specified complexity is found to be part of first life in the past, then we should also conclude that it had an intelligent cause (see chapter 3). But this is what we mean by a supernatural event of creation, namely, a past event that was not produced by natural laws but by intelligent intervention into the natural world. So, rather than the principle of uniformity arguing against miracles, it actually argues in favor of miracles.

In Summation

If God exists—a theistic God—then miracles are possible. We have shown (in chapter 3) that there is good evidence that God exists. Therefore, it follows that miracles are possible and that the biggest miracle of all—creation—actually happened. A God who created the world from nothing cannot be barred

from the world He has made. He can intervene if and when He desires. A God who made life from non-life can bring life back into a dead corpse.

The arguments given against the possibility of miracles are circular; they beg the question by assuming (what is to be proven) that all events have natural causes. This is not only false but is also contrary to science, which has always allowed for intelligent causes (in archeology, forensic science, cryptology, the SETI program, and information theory). And the principle of uniformity (by which we know the past) does not eliminate intelligent causes of past events. Instead, it calls for them in archaeology and in biology. For the specified complexity in first life, by analogy with specified complexity known in the present, must have had an intelligent cause. Thus, science rightly understood does not eliminate intelligent intervention into nature; rather, it calls for it. Miracles can happen. The biggest miracle (creation) has happened, and we must examine the evidence to see if other miracles (like those in the Gospels) have happened (see chapter 8).

CHAPTER 5: MIRACLES CAN BE USED TO CONFIRM A MESSAGE FROM GOD

The Chain of Thought

THIS BOOK IS ONE LONG CHAIN OF REASONING (see chapter 1). We have already seen that truth about reality is knowable (chapter 1); that opposites cannot both be true (chapter 2); that a theistic God exists (chapter 3), and that miracles are possible (chapter 4). Now in this chapter we ask whether miracles performed in connection with a truth claim are a divine confirmation of that claim.

Once we conclude that it does, then we will show that the New Testament documents are historically reliable (chapter 6, next). Then we will examine the New Testament and see that Jesus not only claimed to be God (chapter 7), but that His divinity was confirmed by a unique convergence of miracles (chapter 8). If so, we can then conclude that Jesus was God in human flesh (chapter 9). Of course, whatever Jesus (who is God) affirmed as true, is true (chapter 10). Finally, we will see that Jesus affirmed that the Bible is the Word of God (chapter 11). From this it will follow that the Bible is the Word of God (chapter 12). And as we learned earlier (in chapter 2), whatever is opposed to any biblical truth is false. This is the whole story, but we are not there yet. First, we must discuss a crucial part of the argument, namely, that miracles performed in connection with a truth claim are acts of God to confirm that truth through a messenger of God.

As shown in chapter four, if a theistic God exists, then miracles are

possible. Now, we need to know what purpose a miracle could have, if one did occur. The answer from orthodox forms all three major theistic religions Judaism, Islam, and Christianity) is the same: *Miracles performed in connection with a truth claim are acts of God to confirm the truth of God through a messenger of God*.[81]

It is reasonable to assume that a personal God who made persons in His image (Gen. 1:27) would want to communicate with them. But how would they know it was God speaking? The answer lies in miracles. One thing unique to a supernatural Being is supernatural acts. Thus, it would be understandable that God would confirm His message to mankind through supernatural means. Indeed, this is what all three of the great theistic religions claim—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

THE PRIMARY PURPOSE33 OF MIRACLES IN JUDAISM

According to the Old Testament, when Moses was asked by God to lead Israel out of Egypt, he replied, “What if they do not believe me or listen to me and say, ‘The LORD did not appear to you’? Then the LORD said to him, ‘What is that in your hand?’ ‘A staff,’ he replied. The LORD said, ‘Throw it on the ground.’ Moses threw it on the ground and it became a snake, and he ran from it. Then the LORD said to him, ‘Reach out your hand and take it by the tail.’ So Moses reached out and took hold of the snake and it turned back into a staff in his hand. ‘This,’ said the LORD, ‘is so *that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you*’” (Exod. 4:1–5, emphasis added).

It is plain that the miracles were intended to confirm the message God had given him. God, in fact, offered multiple miracles. “If they do not believe you or pay attention to the first miraculous sign, they may believe the second. But if they do not believe these two signs or listen to you, take some water from the Nile and pour it on the dry ground. The water you take from the river will become blood on the ground” (Exod. 4:8–9).

Later, when Moses’ authority was challenged by Korah, God again vindicated Moses by a miracle. Moses said to Korah and all his followers, “‘in the morning the LORD will show who belongs to Him and who is holy, and he will have that person come near Him. The man he chooses he will cause to come near Him. . . .’ Then Moses said, ‘This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea: If these men die a natural death and experience only what usually happens to men, then the LORD has not sent me. But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the grave, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt.’” Indeed, “They went down alive into the grave,

with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community" (Num. 16:5, 28–30, 33). Moses' divine authority was firmly confirmed from this point on.

Later, when confronted by belief in pagan deities, Elijah the prophet challenged the people of Israel: "'How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal is God, follow him.' But the people said nothing" (1 Kgs. 18:21). To prove he was a prophet of the true God, *Yahweh*, Elijah proposed a contest in which they both attempted to invoke a supernatural confirmation. When the prophets of Baal could not bring down fire on their sacrifice from heaven, Elijah had the altar to *Yahweh* drenched with water and prayed, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command" (1 Kgs. 18:36). The text adds, "Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. And when all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, 'The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!'" (1 Kgs. 18:38–39).

THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF MIRACLES ACCORDING TO CHRISTIANITY

From the very beginning of the Gospels, miracles were used to confirm the claims of Jesus. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, said to Jesus: “Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him” (John 3:2). Indeed, Jesus Himself said, “‘That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins’ said to the paralytic, ‘I say to you arise take up your bed, and go your way to your house’” (Mark 2:10-11). Matthew records that some Pharisees and teachers of the law still demanded a confirming sign from Jesus, saying, “Teacher, we want to see a miraculous sign from you.” In response, Jesus announced that soon they would have the greatest confirming sign of all: “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah” (Mat. 12:38–39).

When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask Jesus whether He was the Messiah, Luke records, “At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. So He replied to the messengers, ‘Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor’ ” (Luke 7:21–22).

In his sermon at Pentecost, Peter told the crowd that Jesus had been “accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him” (Acts 2:22). Hebrews 2:3–4 proclaims that God has testified to His “great salvation” in the gospel “by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.” So, miracles were used to confirm the apostolic message. They were the supernatural sign for their sermon; the divine confirmation for their revelation.

In defense of his apostleship at Corinth, Paul wrote, “The things that

mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance" (2 Cor. 12:12). So, both Jesus and His apostles used miracles to confirm that their message was from God.

John concludes his whole Gospel with the claim that miracles are connected with Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. He wrote, "Truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life through His name" (John 20:30–31).

THE PRIMARY PURPOSE OF MIRACLES ACCORDING TO ISLAM

Muhammad claimed to be a prophet of God in line with the great prophets of the Bible. He was aware that God confirmed prophets of old by miracles. He said, “If they reject thee, So were rejected apostles Before thee, who came with clear Signs” (Sura 3:184). The Qur’an records Moses saying of his miracles, “Thou knowest well that these things have been sent down by none but the Lord of the heavens and the earth as eye-opening Evidence” (Sura 17:102). Allah says, “Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron, with Our signs and authority manifest” (Sura 23:45). Muhammad even recognized that God gave Jesus the power to heal and to raise the dead in confirmation of His message (Sura 19:29–31, 5:110).[82] So, in principle, all three great monotheistic religions agree that a truth claim can be substantiated by miracles.

EVEN UNBELIEVERS ADMIT MIRACLES COULD BE USED FOR DIVINE CONFIRMATION

Even many who reject miracles agree that miracles could be used to support the truth claims of the religion possessing them. David Hume indirectly implied that truly unique miracles would confirm the truth claims of a religion. He argued only that similar signs by conflicting religions would be self-canceling. He claimed only that "every miracle, therefore, pretended to have been wrought in any of these religions (and all of them abound in miracles) . . . so has it the same force, though more indirectly, to overthrow every other system" and "in destroying a rival system, it likewise destroys the credit of those miracles on which that system was established." Since a miracle's "direct scope is to establish the particular system to which it is attributed, so has it the same force . . . to overthrow every other system."[83] This leaves open the possibility that a religion presenting unique miraculous confirmation would be true and all opposing claims false.

Likewise, agnostic Bertrand Russell admitted that miracles, if they could occur, could be used to confirm a divine claim. When asked, "What kind of evidence could convince you God exists?" Russell said, "I think that if I heard a voice from the sky predicting all that was going to happen to me during the next twenty-four hours, including events that would have seemed highly improbable, and if all these events then proceed to happen, then I might perhaps be convinced at least of the existence of some superhuman intelligence. I can imagine other evidence of the same sort which might convince me, but as far as I know, no such evidence exists."[84]

THE LOGICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN MIRACLES AND DIVINE CONFIRMATION.

The logic behind a miracle being used to confirm a religious truth claim goes like this:

(1) If a theistic God exists, then miracles are possible.

(2) A miracle is a special act of a theistic God.

(3) A theistic God is all-knowing (omniscient).

(4) A theistic God is also a morally perfect Being (see chapter 3),

(5) An all-knowing, all-perfect God cannot err or deceive.

(6) Hence, a theistic God would not act to confirm something as true that was false.

(7) Therefore, true miracles in connection with a message confirm that message to be from God:

(a) the miracle confirms the message,

(b) the sign confirms the sermon,

(c) an act of God confirms the Word of God, and

(d) new revelation needs new confirmation.

If there is an all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-good God, then it follows that He would not perform a miraculous act to confirm a lie. Since miracles are by nature special acts of God, God would not act contrary to His own nature. The God of all truth would not miraculously confirm error. Hence, when a truth claim is repeatedly confirmed by miracles, such as the Old Testament prophets were, and as Jesus and the New Testament apostles were, then this claim is true and all opposing views to what they taught are false.

CRITERIA FOR MIRACULOUS CONFIRMATION

Several criteria can be established on the basis of principles discussed above for allowing miracles as a confirmation of a truth claim. These criteria are reasonable safeguards against false miracles being used to establish false claims. In order to count as a confirmation of a claim to come from God the confirming events must be the following:

1. The events must be truly supernatural. The events used must be truly supernatural. No anomalies, magic, purely providential acts (that involve no supernatural intervention), or psychosomatic cures qualify as true miracles (see chapter 4).

2. There must be multiple miracles. There should be at least two or more miracles. This is based on the valid legal principle that "the mouth of two or three witnesses" (Deut.17:6) is necessary to confirm important matters.

3. The miraculous events must be connected with some truth claim in the name of God.

Unless the truth claim is made for God in the connection with the miracle, there is no way to know the miracle is a confirmation of that truth claim. For any miracle not connected with a truth claim is not a support of that claim.

4. The miraculous events must be unique. Similar unusual events associated with conflicting truth claims are self-cancelling, as David Hume correctly argued. Hence, if one religion is to be confirmed as the true religion, then other opposing religions cannot have the same kind of alleged miracles in connection with their truth claims.

5. A predictive element is helpful in confirming a divine claim. Predictions made in connection with truth claims are helpful in confirming the supernatural nature of truth claims connected with it. They eliminate charges that the unusual event was not truly supernatural or that it might be false. Otherwise, it might be viewed as a fluke.

For example, Jesus and other prophets are said to have predicted and

performed miracles that confirmed their claims. Jesus predicted His resurrection from early in His ministry on (Mat. 12:40, 17:22–23, 20:18–19; John 2:19–22). He predicted the resurrection as a "sign" (miracle) of His claims (Mat. 12:39–40). Once Jesus said in advance of a miracle that it would be evidence of His claim to be the Messiah: "'But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' He said to the paralytic, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home'" (Mark 2:10–11). On another occasion, Jesus said, "Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He" (John 13:19). Elijah predicted that fire would come from heaven to consume the sacrifice (1 Kgs. 18:22f.). Moses promised supernatural judgments of God on Egypt (Exod. 4:21–23). Moses announced that the rod of God would bud (Num. 17:5) and that the rebellious Korah would be judged (Num. 16:28–30). If true, these would all count for supernatural truth claims. Isaiah made it very clear that only God could make accurate predictions long before the events occurred when he wrote, "Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, lest you should say, 'My idol has done them . . .'" (Isa. 48:5). Only an all-knowing theistic God can make accurate long range predictions. Indeed, a sign of false-prophets is that they make predictions that do not come to pass (Deut. 18:22).

Concluding Comments

We have already seen that God exists (chapter 3) and, thus, that miracles are possible (chapter 4). In this chapter we saw that miracles can be used to confirm whether a message connected with it is truly from God. In order to be so used they must be truly supernatural, multiple, unique, and connected with a truth claim. Making predictions (that come to pass) in advance of the event gives even more certainty that it is of God. In the next few chapters we will see that the New Testament documents are historically reliable (chapter 6), that in them Jesus claimed to be God in human flesh (chapter 7), and that this claim was confirmed by a unique and unprecedented convergence of three sets of miracles

(chapter 8). Thus, we will see Jesus was an incarnation of the theistic God—God almighty, the one and only Creator of the universe (chapter 3) in human flesh!

CHAPTER 6: THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS ARE HISTORICALLY RELIABLE

Introduction

THIS IS THE SECOND MOST IMPORTANT CHAPTER IN THIS BOOK (after chapter 3). If God exists (chapter 3), then miracles are possible (chapter 4). And since miracles are possible, then they can be used to confirm a message from God (chapter 5). But has there been a message from God? The answer to this will depend on whether the New Testament documents are historically reliable. If they are, then we have the message, namely, that God has come in human flesh and lived among us (chapter 7), and we have a historically reliable record of the miracles that confirm that message from God (chapter 8). Since all this depends on the reliability of the New Testament, it is crucial that we look at the evidence for its historical reliability.

The Reliability of the New Testament Manuscripts

There are two basic lines of evidence that support the reliability of the New Testament manuscripts. First, they were accurately copied down through the years. Second, the persons who recorded the teachings and events in them were reliable witnesses and writers. In short, (1) we have more, earlier, and more reliably copied manuscripts than any other book from the ancient world. (2) The people who recorded the events and teachings in these manuscripts were more reliable writers than those for any other events from that time. This is evidenced by the number of writers, their proximity to the events, the confirmation by other sources, and the historical and archaeological confirmation of events in their writings.

THE NUMBER OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS

The number of New Testament manuscripts is overwhelming compared with the typical books from antiquity which has only ten to twenty manuscripts copies. By contrast the New Testament some 5800 Greek manuscripts in existence. The most for any other book is Homer's Iliad with 643 manuscripts. [85] *This makes the New Testament the best textually supported book from antiquity.*

THE EARLY DATE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS

The typical gap between the time of composition and the earliest manuscript of a book from the ancient world is nearly a thousand years. By contrast the earliest undisputed manuscript of a book of the New Testament, the John Ryland Papyri (P52), is dated A.D. 117—138. It survives from within about a generation of the time most scholars believe it was composed (c. A.D. 95). Since it was composed in Asia Minor and was found in Egypt, this demands some circulation time that would place the composition of John in the first century. Whole books (the Bodmer Papyri) are available from A.D. 200, only a little over 100 years after the New Testament was completed. And most of the New Testament, including all the Gospels, are available in the Chester Beatty Papyri manuscripts from 150 years after the New Testament was finished (in about A.D. 250).

The noted British manuscript expert, Sir Frederick Kenyon wrote, "The interval then between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed." Thus, "Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established."[86] *No other book from the ancient world has as small a time gap (between composition and earliest manuscript copies) as the New Testament has.*

THE ACCURACY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

What is more, not only are there more and earlier manuscripts of the New Testament, but they are more accurately copied than other books from the ancient world. The great New Testament scholar and Princeton Professor, Bruce Metzger, made a comparison of the *Iliad* of Homer, the *Mahabarata* in Hinduism, and the New Testament. He found the text of the *Mahabarata* to represent only 90% of the original (with 10% textual corruption), the *Iliad* to be 95% pure, and only one half of one percent of the New Testament text being in doubt. The great Greek Scholar, A. T. Robertson, estimated the general concern of textual criticism to be with only a "thousandth part of the entire text."[87] *This would place the accuracy of the New Testament text at 99.9%—the best known for any book from the ancient world*.[88]

Further, significant portions of some ancient books are missing. "For example, 107 of Livy's 142 books of Roman history have been lost. Of Tacitus's original *Histories and Annals*, only approximately half remain."[89] Yet all of the books of the New Testament have been preserved, and no significant portion of any New Testament book is missing. In fact, Sir Frederick Kenyon noted that "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 the other of these ancient authorities. *This can be said of no other ancient book in the world."*[90]

THE CONFIRMATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT MANUSCRIPTS BY EARLY CHURCH FATHERS

There are some 19,368 citations by the early Fathers from the Gospels alone. This includes 268 by Justin Martyr; 1,038 by Irenaeus; 1,017 by Clement of Alexandria; 9,231 by Origen; 3,822 by Tertullian; 734 by Hippolytus; and 3,258 by Eusebius.[91] Even before these men there were citations in the earliest writers of the Church. *Pseudo-Barnabas* (A.D. 70-130) cited Matthew, Mark, and Luke. *Clement of Rome* (c. A.D. 95-97) cited Matthew, John, and 1 Corinthians. *Ignatius* (c. A.D. 110) referred to 6 of Paul's epistles. *Polycarp* (c. 110-150) quoted all four Gospels, Acts, and most of Paul's Epistles. The *Shepherd of Hermas* (A.D. 115-140) cited Matthew, Mark, Acts, 1 Corinthians, and other books. The *Didache* (c. A.D. 120-150) referred to Matthew, Luke, 1 Corinthians, and other books. *Papias*, companion of Polycarp, who was the disciple of the apostle John quotes his Gospel.

This demonstrates that the Gospels were in existence before they were cited, which would place them well before the end of the first century while some eyewitnesses (like John) were still alive. Further, since some of these writers overlapped with the latest book of the New Testament Gospel of John, widely believed to be dated around A.D. 90, this virtually eliminates any time gap between the completion of the New Testament and the earliest citations of it.

THE RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ACCOUNT

Not only is there a very strong manuscript tradition which supports the conclusion that the present text of the New Testament is a highly accurate representation of the original, but there is abundant evidence that the account of the life of Christ contained therein is also highly reliable history. This is supported by the facts that there are more New Testament books (27), earlier books, based on eyewitness testimony, and confirmed by historical sources than for any book from the ancient world!

The Historicity of Acts

The date and authenticity of the book of Acts is crucial to the historicity of early Christianity and, thus, to apologetics in general. If Acts was written before A.D. 70 while the eyewitnesses were still alive, then it has great historical value in informing us of the earliest Christian beliefs. What is more, if Acts was written by Luke, the companion of the apostle Paul, that places it in the apostolic circle of the earliest disciples of Jesus.

And if Acts was written by A.D. 62 (the traditional date), then it was written by a contemporary of Jesus (who died in A.D. 33). Needless to say, this has great historical value. And if the book of Acts is shown to be historically accurate, then it brings credibility to its reports about the most basic Christian beliefs in the miracle (Acts 2:22), death (Acts 2:23), resurrection (Acts 2:23, 29-32), and ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9-10). Further, if Luke wrote Acts, then his "former treatise" (Acts 1:1), the Gospel of Luke, should be extended the same credibility manifested in the book of Acts.

Evidence of an Early Date for Acts

Roman historian, Colin J. Hemer,[92] numbers seventeen reasons for accepting the traditional early date of Acts during the lifetime of the

contemporaries of the events. These strongly support the historicity of Acts and, indirectly, of the Gospel of Luke, which was also written by Luke (cf. Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1).[93]

Just the first five of Hemer's arguments are sufficient to show that Acts was penned by A.D. 62: (1) there is no mention in Acts of the crucial historical event of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, which places it before that event; (2) there is no hint of the outbreak of the Jewish War in 66 or of any serious or specific deterioration of relations between Romans and Jews which implies it was written before that time; (3) there is no hint of the more immediate deterioration of Christian relations with Rome involved in the Neronian persecution of the late 60s; (4) further, since the apostle Paul is still alive (Acts 28), it must have been written before his death (c. A.D. 65); (5) and finally, there is no hint of the death of James at the hands of the Sanhedrin in c. 62 recorded by Josephus (*Antiquities* 20.9.1.200).[94]

By comparison, to claim that Acts was written after A.D. 65 is like claiming that a book on the life of president John F. Kennedy was written well after 1965 (when he was assassinated) but never mentioned his death. If such an important event had already occurred, it was too important to omit in a book written on the history of that time and place. Likewise, any book like Acts that was written after the death of the apostle Paul (c. A D. 65) or the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70) would surely have mentioned these momentous events.

Evidence that the Author of Acts was a First-Rate Historian

In addition to the arguments for an early date for Acts, Hemer demonstrates that the author was a first-rate historian. These include the following:

(1) items of geographical detail and the like that may be assumed to have been generally known;

(2) more specialized details, which may still have been widely known

to those who possessed relevant experience: titles of governors, army units, major routes, etc., which may have been accessible to those who traveled or were involved in administration, but perhaps not to those without such backgrounds;

(3) specifics of local routes, boundaries, titles of city magistrates, and the like, which may not be closely controllable in date, but are unlikely to have been known except to a writer who had visited the districts;

(4) the correlation of the dates of known kings and governors with the ostensible chronology of the Acts framework;

(5) details appropriate to the date of Paul but not appropriate to the conditions of a date earlier or especially later;

(6) "undesigned coincidences" between Acts and the accepted Pauline Epistles;

(7) latent internal correlations within Acts;

(8) independently attested details, which agree with the Alexandrian against the Western text (or the reverse) and may thus relate to stages in the textual tradition of Acts;

(9) matters of common geographical knowledge or the like, mentioned perhaps informally or allusively, with an unstudied accuracy which bespeaks familiarity;

(10) differences in formulation within Acts as a possible indication of different categories of sources;

(11) peculiarities in the selection of detail, such as the inclusion of details theologically unimportant, but explicable in other ways which may bear on the historical question;

(12) as a particular case of the preceding, details whose "immediacy" suggests the author's reproduction of recent experience and which are less readily explicable as the product of longer-term reflective editing and shaping;

(13) items reflecting culture or idioms which are suggestive of a first rather than a second century atmosphere;

(14) interrelated complexes in which two or more kinds of correlation

> are combined, or where related details each show separate correlations, so that the possibility arises of building a larger fragment of historical reconstruction from a jigsaw of interlocking units;
>
> (15) cases where the progress of discovery and knowledge simply provides new background information of use to the commentator of whatever viewpoint, while not bearing significantly on the issue of historicity; and
>
> (16) precise details which lie within the range of contemporary possibilities, but whose particular accuracy we have no means of verifying one way or the other.

In addition to all this, the author of Acts demonstrates detailed knowledge of the historical names, places, persons, and events of the times like the correct title of the emperor (Acts 25:21, 25), general facts of navigation and corn-supply, and points of Judean topography or Semitic nomenclature that are glossed or explained (Acts 1:12, 19, etc.), whereas basic Jewish institutions are not (1:12 again, 2:1, 4:1, etc.). Luke also shows special knowledge of the topography of Jerusalem. He gives (in Acts 12:4) detail on the organization of a military guard and in 16:8 ff. he acknowledges the part played by Troas in the system of communication. In Acts 17:1, Amphipolis and Apollonia are known as stations (and presumably overnight stops) on the Egnatian Way from Philippi to Thessalonica. Acts chapters 27–28 contain many details in the geography and navigational details of the voyage to Rome, which will be noted more specifically under other headings.

In addition, Luke manifests an incredible array of knowledge of local places, names, conditions, customs, and circumstances that befit only an eyewitness contemporary of the time and events. All of these have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research to be true of the persons, times, and places mentioned by Luke. This includes knowledge that (of):

(1) a natural crossing between correctly named ports (Luke 13:4-5);

(2) the proper port (Perga) along the direct destination of a ship crossing from Cyprus (13:13);

(3) the proper location of Lycaonia (14:6);

(4) the unusual but correct declension of the name Lystra (14:6);

(5) the correct language spoken in Lystra (Lyconian);

(6) two gods known to be so associated (Zeus and Hermes);

(7) the proper port Attalia that returning travelers would use (14:25);

(8) the correct order of approach to Derbe then Lystra from Cilician Gates (16:1);

(9) the proper form of the name Troas (16:8);
(10) the place of a conspicuous sailor's landmark, Samotrace (16:11);
(11) the proper description of Philippi as a Roman colony (16:12);
(12) the right location for the river (Gangites) near Philippi (16:13);
(13) the proper association of Thyatira as a center of dyeing (16:14);
(14) correct designations for the magistrates and of the colony (16:22);
(15) the proper location (Amphilpolis and Appolonia) of where travelers would spend successive nights on this journey (17:1);
(16) the presence of a synagogue in Thessalonica (17:1);
(17) the proper title “politarchs” used for the magistrates there (17:6);
(18) the correct implication that sea-travel is the most convenient way of reaching Athens with favoring East winds of summer sailing (17:14);
(19) the abundant presence of images in Athens (17:16);
(20) the reference to a synagogue in Athens (17:17);
(21) the depiction of the Athenian life of philosophical debate in the Agora (17:17);
(22) the use of the correct Athenian slang word for Paul, a *spermologos* (17:18) as well as the court (*Areios pagos)*;
(23) the proper characterization of the Athenian character (17:21);
(24) an altar to an “unknown god” (17:23);
(25) the proper reaction of Greeks philosophers who denied bodily resurrection (17:32);
(26) *Areopagites* is the correct title for a member of the court (17:34);

(27) a Corinthian synagogue (18:4);
(28) correct designation of Gallio as proconsul, resident in Corinth (18:12);
(29) proper positioning of the *bema*, overlooking Corinth's *forum* (18:16f.);
(30) the name “Tyrannus” as attested from Ephesus in first century inscriptions (19:9);
(31) well known shrines and images of Artemis (19:24);
(32) reference to the well attested “great goddess Artemis” (19:27);
(33) the Ephesian theater was the meeting-place of the city (19:29);
(34) use of the correct title *grammateus* for the chief executive magistrate in Ephesus (19:35);
(35) mention of proper title of honor *neokoros* authorized by the Romans (19:35);
(36) correct name to designate the goddess (19:37);
(37) proper term used for those holding court (19:38);
(38) use of plural, *anthupatoi,* may be remarkable reference to the fact that *two* men were conjointly exercising the functions of proconsul at this time (19:38);
(39) the “regular' assembly as the precise phrase is attested elsewhere (19:39);
(40) use of precise ethnic designation, *beroiaios* (20:4);
(41) the employment of ethnic term *Asianos* (20:4);
(42) the implied recognition of the strategic importance assigned to this city of Troas (20:7f.);
(43) danger of the coastal trip in this location (20:13);
(44) correct knowledge of sequence of places (20:14-15);
(45) the correct name of the city as a neuter plural (Patara) (21:1);
(46) the appropriate route passing across the open sea south of Cyprus favored by persistent northwest winds (21:3);
(47) the suitable distance between these cities (21:8);
(48) this characteristically Jewish act of piety (21:24); the Jewish law regarding Gentile use of Temple area (21:28);
(49) the permanent stationing of a Roman cohort (*tagma*) at Antonia to suppress any disturbance at festival times (21:31);
(50) the flight of steps used by the guards (21:31, 35);
(51) common way to obtain Roman citizenship at this time (22:28);

(52) the tribune is impressed with Roman rather than Tarsian citizenship 22:29);
(53) that Ananias is high priest at the time (23:2); (53) Felix is governor at this time (23:34);
(54) the natural stopping-point on the way to Caesarea (23:31);
(55) whose jurisdiction Cilicia was at the time (23:34);
(56) the provincial penal procedure of the time (24:1-9);
(57) the name “Porcius Festus” agrees precisely with that given by Josephus (24:27);
(58) the right of appeal for Roman citizens (25:11);
(59) the legal formula *de quibus cognoscere volebam* (25:18);
(60) the characteristic form of reference to the emperor at the time (25:26);
(61) the best shipping lanes at the time (27:4);
(62) the common bonding of Cilicia and Pamphylia (27:4);
(63) the principal port to find a ship sailing to Italy (27:5);
(64) the slow passage to Cnidus in the face of the typical northwest wind (27:7);
(65) the right route to sail in view of the winds (27:7);
(66) the locations of Fair Havens and the neighboring site of Lasea (27:8);
(67) Fair Havens was a poorly sheltered roadstead (27:12);
(68) a noted tendency of a south wind in these climates to back suddenly to a violent northeaster, the well-known *gregale* (27:13);
(69) the nature of a square-rigged ancient ship, having no option but to be driven before a gale (27:16);
(70) the precise place and name of this island (27:16);
(71) the appropriate maneuvers for the safety of the ship in its particular plight (27:16f.);
(72) the fourteenth night in a remarkable calculation, based inevitably on a compounding of estimates and probabilities, confirmed in the judgment of experienced Mediterranean navigators (27:27);
(73) the proper term of the time for the Adriatic (27:27);
(74) the precise term (*Bolisantes*) to be used for taking soundings (27:28);
(75) the position that the probable line of approach of a ship now released again to run before an easterly wind (27:39);

(76) the severe liability on guards who permitted a prisoner to escape (27:42);
(77) the local people and superstitions of the day (28:4-6);
(78) the proper title *protos* (*tes nesou*) (28:7);
(79) Rhegium as a refuge to await a southerly wind to carry them through the strait (28:13);
(80) Appii Forum and Tres Tabernae as correctly placed stopping-places on the Appian Way (28:15);
(81) appropriate means of custody with Roman soldiers (28:16);
(82) the conditions of imprisonment, living "at his own expense" (28:30-31).

Conclusion.

The historicity of the book of Acts is confirmed by overwhelming evidence. Nothing like this amount of detailed confirmation exists for any other book from antiquity. This is not only a direct confirmation of the earliest Christian belief in the death and resurrection of Christ, but also indirectly of the Gospel record. For the same author (Luke) wrote a Gospel as well (see below). Further, substantially the same basic events are recorded in two other Gospels (Matthew and Mark). And for that matter the Gospel of John provides the same picture of the most crucial events, namely, the miracles, deity, and the death and resurrection of Christ. Thus, the historicity of the most crucial events to orthodox Christianity is thereby established. Another noted Roman historian, A. N. Sherwin-White calls the mythological view "unbelievable."[95] The reason for this is that the evidence for the book of Acts is much stronger than evidence for Roman history of that period.

The Historicity of the Gospel Accounts

Since Matthew and Mark provide the same basic data on the life, teaching, death, and resurrection of Christ, what argues for the authenticity of one also argues for the historicity of the others. Thus, we will concentrate on Luke, since there are numerous arguments to support its historicity.

The Author of Luke is Known to be an Accurate Historian

Dr. Luke, travel companion of the apostle Paul, is widely believed to be the author of the books of Luke for many good reasons. First, the author of Acts: (1) was highly educated, judging by the sophistication he wrote in Greek with (cf. Lk. 1:1-4); (2) was not one of the twelve apostles (Luke 1:2); (3) was a participant in many events himself (Luke 1:3); (4) was knowledgeable about the apostle Paul; (5) knew and quoted the Old Testament in Greek; (6) had a good knowledge of the political and social situation in the first century; (7) was a traveler with the apostle Paul at times, as indicated by the "we" sections (16:10-17, 20:5-21:18, 27:1-28:16); (8) was not Timothy, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaiys, Tychichus, or Trophimus who are excluded by Acts 20:4; (9) had a knowledge of medicine, as indicated by his use of medical terms and references. The only companion of Paul known to fit all these characteristics was "Luke the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14).[96]

However, it not the question of who wrote the book that is important but whether or not he was a reliable source. As R. T. France noted, "Authorship . . . is not a major factor in our assessment of the reliability of the gospels."[97]

Second, the same person who wrote Acts also wrote the Gospel of Luke since: (1) both are written to the person "Theophilus" (cf. Luke 1:1 with Acts 1:1); (2) both are written in very good Greek; (3) both show a medical interest; (4) Acts refers to a "former account" the author had written about Jesus (1:1); and (5) there is an unbroken and virtually unchallenged tradition from the time of the early Christian Church until modern times attributing it to Dr. Luke.

Third, the author of Acts is known to be a first-rate historian (see above). This has been established by both Sir William Ramsey in *St. Paul the Traveler and the Roman Citizen* and, more recently, by Colin Hemer in *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenic History.*[98] Another noted Roman historian strongly supports the historicity of the Gospels, saying: "So, it is astonishing that while

Greco-Roman historians have been growing in confidence, the twentieth-century study of the Gospel narratives, starting from no less promising material have taken so gloomy a turn in the development of form-criticism . . . that the historical Christ is unknowable and the history of his mission cannot be written. This seems very curious."[99] Thus, he found the belief that these accounts are legendary simply "unbelievable."[100]

The Gospel of Luke Was Written by about A.D. 60-61

From this we can conclude that the Gospel of Luke is also a first-rate historical work written around A.D. 60—61. For he is the same author as the book of Acts, which has been proven to be a highly accurate and detailed historical account. And since Matthew, Mark, and John present the same basic picture of Christ, they too are historically reliable.[101]

This is further supported by the fact that Luke states his historical interest in his prologue (1:1-4), claiming that (1) he is aware of other earlier written accounts of Christ's life, (2) the Gospel of Luke is based on "eye-witness" testimony, and (3) he had "carefully investigated everything from the beginning." Furthermore, Luke proves his historical interest by correlating his narration of the life of Christ with secular history and exact dates. He not only tells when Jesus was born, namely, when "Caesar Augustus" was king (2:1), but the exact year when Jesus began His ministry, namely, "in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar—when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene—during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert." And all of these check out with secular history of the time.

Second, noted Roman historian Colin Hemer has provided strong arguments for Acts being written by A.D. 62 (see above), and since Luke was written before Acts (cf. Luke 1:1 with Acts 1:1), then it follows that the Gospel

of Luke comes from around A.D. 60—61. But this is only 27 years after Christ died and rose from the dead. This means that many of the generation of eye-witnesses of Christ of which Luke speaks (Luke 1:2) were still alive when he wrote his Gospel, a strong indication of its historical reliability.

William F. Albright on the Historicity of the Gospels

With a lifetime of research under his belt, the Dean of twentieth century archaeologists wrote, "In short, thanks to the Qumran discoveries, the New Testament proves to be in fact what it was formerly believed to be: the teaching of Christ and his immediate followers between cir. 25 and cir. 80 A.D."[102] More specifically, Albright affirmed, "I should answer that, in my opinion, *every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century A.D.* (*very probably sometime between about 50 and 75 A.D.*)"[103] He even went so far as to say that "the evidence from the Qumran community shows that the concepts, terminology, and mindset of the Gospel of John is probably early 1st. cent."[104] Albright believed that "biblical historical data are accurate to an extent far surpassing the ideas of any modern critical students, who have consistently tended to err on the side of hypercriticism."[105] Since it is commonly believed that Jesus died about A.D. 33, placing some books in the 50s and 60s would mean that *it was written within 20 to 30 years after the events while most of the eyewitnesses were still alive!* Since there are multiple records involved (8 or 9 authors and 27 books), this provides a strong basis for the historicity of their writings.

The Confirmation by a Liberal Critic of the New Testament

New Testament scholar, Bishop John Robinson, was noted for his role in spawning the "Death of God" movement in the latter part of the twentieth century. Before he died and without recanting his negatives views, Bishop Robinson wrote a revealing book titled *Redating the New Testament.* In it Robinson places Matthew at c. A.D. 40—60+, Mark at c. 45—60, Luke at c. 57—60+, and John at c. 40—65+.[106] This would mean that some Gospels could be as early as seven years after the time Jesus died! And by the outer limits they were all composed within the limits of the eyewitnesses and contemporaries of the events. This is much too early to deny their basic historicity.

The Gospels are too Early to be Mythological

Julius Muller challenged the scholars of his day to produce even one example where in one generation a myth developed where the most prominent elements are myths.[107] No one has ever met the challenge because none exist. Roman Historian Sherwin-White observed that "Herodotus enables us to test the tempo of myth-making, and the tests suggest that even two generations are too short a span to allow the mythical tendency to prevail over the hard historic core of the oral tradition."[108] Commenting on this, William Lane Craig noted that this enables us to determine the rate at which legends develop. “The tests show that *even two generations is too short to allow legendary tendencies to wipe out the hard core of historical fact.”*[109] And by any reasonable account the hard core included the basis messianic claim of Christ, His death, and resurrection.

Historical and Archaeological Confirmation of the Gospels

Luke gives historical cross hairs that verify its historical roots. He said Jesus began His ministry “In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar [A.D. 29] when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert” (Luke 3:1-2). It is noteworthy that

Luke gives (1) an exact date (A.D. 29), (2) eight people, all who are known from history, and (3) all were known to live at this exact time. This is not a once upon a time story (myth).

Anyone familiar with the first century Jewish culture will recognize immediately that the Gospel records breathe this same air. The mention of Pharisees, Sadducees, Jewish traditions, customs, and even the use of Aramaic words (cf. Mat 27:46; Acts 9:36), along with the cities and topography of the land, are all very familiar to other documentation of first century Judaism as recorded by Josephus and others.

In addition, the New Testament mention of historic figures like Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1), Tiberius Caesar (Luke 3:1), Quirinius governor of Syria (Luke 2:2), king Herod (Mat. 2:3), Governor Pontius Pilate (Mat. 27:2), Annas Caiphas the high priests (Luke 3:2), John the Baptist, and others. All of these are known to have existed and operated in the time and place the New Testament locates them.

What is more, in addition to the overwhelming archaeological support for this overall time period (see above), there are references in the Gospels that are supported by specific archaeological finds, such as the Siloam pool, the pool of Bethesda, the Synagogue in Capernaum, the foundation of Herod's temple, Pilate's Pratorium, the vicinity of Golgotha, and the Garden tomb. Likewise, the "Titulus Venetus" helps to illuminate Augustus's Census (in Luke 2:1f.). A Latin plaque mentions "Pontius Pilatus, Prefect of Judea." Even the bones of a first-century crucifixion victim, Yohanan, support the gruesome presentation of Christ's death. And the Nazareth Decree, perhaps circulated between A.D. 41 and 54, is curious in view of the Jewish claim that Jesus' body had been stolen rather than resurrected (cf. Mat. 28:66). Since all previous Roman indictments of this nature involved only a fine, why should such a strong penalty be leveled in Palestine just after Jesus died, was reported to have risen from the tomb, and His

disciples were stirring up dissent in Palestine?[110]

Like the rest of Scripture, the life of Christ portrayed in the Gospels fits perfectly into the known facts unearthed by archaeology of this period. There is no indisputable evidence to the contrary.[111] And, as we have seen, numerous finds have supported it.[112]

The Evidence for the Historicity of Paul's Early Epistles

Even liberal critics who reject the later epistles of Paul are in general agreement that Paul wrote First Corinthians and that it was composed around A.D. 55. D. A. Carson summarizes the evidence well:

> There is an inscription recording a rescript of the emperor Claudius to the people of Delphi that mentions Gallio as holding office of proconsul in Achaia during the period of Claudius's twenty-sixth acclamation as *imperator*—a period known from other inscriptions to cover the first seven months of A.D. 52. . . . Paul's two-and-a-half-year stint in Ephesus would have taken him to the autumn of 55.[113]

It was here in Ephesus that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians some time before Pentecost (Acts 16:8). Because of a possible adjustment by one year of the beginning of Gallio's proconsulship, the date of 1 Corinthians may be A.D. 56.

Now First Corinthians presents the same basic information about Christ found in the Gospels but some five years earlier than Luke. *This places these documents founding the historicity of Christ's death and resurrection within 22-23 years of the time they happened!* Paul wrote:

> Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers

at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep" (1 Cor.15:1-6).

Several important facts emerge from this text. First, the essence of the Christian message is the death and resurrection of Christ—the same thing stressed in all four Gospels.

Second, Paul said that this message was "handed down" to him, implying that it had come from some time earlier. Some New Testament scholars posit that the original message handed to Paul may have been in creedal form from only a few years after the death of Christ. If so, then it places the central message of the Gospel beyond any reasonable historical doubt (see "Creeds" below).

Third, the evidence for the resurrection of Christ rested on over 500 eye-witnesses, a fact that places it out of the category of reasonable doubt. Paul speaks of over 250 eyewitnesses of the resurrection that were still alive when he wrote (15:6). He lists "Cephas" (Peter) who was an apostle as one of the eyewitnesses (15:5), "the twelve" (apostles), and James, the brother of Jesus, as witnesses and contemporaries. And there is good evidence for this early date of 1 Corinthians.

Fourth, the readers of 1 Corinthians were contemporaries of the eyewitnesses of the resurrection, and Paul gave them an implied challenge to check out the eye-witnesses for themselves, since Paul added "most of whom are still living" (v. 6).

Fifth, the internal evidence includes (1) the repeated claim of the books to be from Paul (1:1, 12-17; 3:4, 6; 22:16:21); (2) the many parallels with the book of Acts; (3) the ring of authenticity from beginning to end; (4) the mention of 500 who had seen Christ, most of whom were still alive and could verify Paul's claims (15:6); (5) the harmony of the contents with what was known about Corinth at the time.

Likewise, the external evidence is powerful from the first and second centuries on, including: (1) Clement of Rome's *Epistle to the Corinthians* (chapter 47); (2) the *Epistle of Barnabas* (chapter 4); (3) the *Didache* (chapter 10); (4) the *Shepherd of Hermas* (chapter 4). There are almost 600 quotations of 1 Corinthians in Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian alone. It is one of the best attested books from its time period.

Sixth, 1 Corinthians, along with 2 Corinthians, Galatians, and Philippians (which are also well attested), not only reveals a historical interest in the events of Jesus' life, but it provides a vast array of details about it also found in the Gospel records. Paul speaks of Jesus' (1) Jewish ancestry (Gal. 3:16); (2) His Davidic descent (Rom. 1:3); (3) His virgin birth (Gal. 4:4); (4) His life under Jewish law (Gal. 4:4); (5) His brothers (1 Cor. 9:5); (6) one of whom was named James (1 Cor. 5:7); (7) His twelve disciples (1 Cor. 15:7); (8) that some had wives (1 Cor. 9:5); (9) that Paul knew Peter and James (Gal. 1:18-2:16); (10) Jesus' poverty (2 Cor. 8:9); (11) His humility (Phil. 2:5-7); (12) His meekness and gentleness (2 Cor. 10:1); (13) His abuse by others (Rom. 15:3); (14) His teachings on divorce and remarriage (1 Cor. 7:10-11); (15) on paying wages of ministers (1 Cor. 9:14); (16) on paying taxes (Rom. 13:6-7); (17) on the duty to love one's neighbors (Rom. 13:9); (18) on Jewish ceremonial uncleanliness (Rom. 14:14); (19) on Jesus' titles of deity (Rom. 1:3-4; 10:9); (20) on vigilance in view of Jesus' second coming (1 Thess. 4:15); (21) which would be like a thief in the night (1 Thes. 5:2-11); (22) on Jesus' teaching on the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-25); (23) on Jesus' sinless life (2 Cor. 5:21); (24) His death on the Cross (Rom. 4:25; 5:8; Gal. 3:13; 1 Cor. 15:3); (25) specifically by crucifixion (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 2:20); (26) by Jewish instigation (1 Thess. 2:14-15); (27) on Jesus' burial (1 Cor. 15:4); (28) His resurrection on the "third day" (1 Cor. 15:4); (29) His post-resurrection appearance to the apostles (1 Cor. 15:5-8); (30) to other eyewitnesses (1 Cor. 15:6); and (31) His position now at God's right hand (Rom.

8:34).

Further, Paul rests the very truth of Christianity on the historicity of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12f.). And Paul gives historical details about Jesus' contemporaries, the apostles (1 Cor. 15:5-8), including His own private encounters with Peter and the apostles (Gal.1:18f.; 2:1f.). What is more, he notes that over 250 eyewitnesses were still living when he wrote 1 Corinthians, leaving them with the implicit challenge to verify His claims (15:6). One could scarcely ask for better evidence for the central historical truth of Christianity narrated in the Four Gospels with greater detail.

Confirmation of the New Testament by Early "Creeds" or Traditions

A number of scholars point to evidence in the New Testament of earlier creeds or traditions that point to the historicity of the basic message in the Gospels. Since most people in the first century were illiterate, short statements about Christ that were easy to memorize were a good way to transmit truth. These "creeds" point to indicators such as rhythm and repetitive patterns. Even the authors note that it is a tradition. Possible examples are found in Luke 24:34; Acts 2:22-24, 30-32; 3:13-15; 4:10-12; 5:29-32; 10:39-41; 13:37-39; Rom.1:3-4; 4:25; 10:9; 1 Cor.11:23f.; 15:3-8; Phil. 2:6-11; 1 Tim. 2:6; 3:16; 6:13; 2 Tim. 2:8; 1 Pet. 3:18; 1 John 4:2.[114]

The most interesting of these is found in 1 Cor. 15:3-8, which affirms: "For what *I received* I passed on to you as of first importance: *that* Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, *that* he was buried, *that* he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and *that* he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born" [emphasis added].

What is noteworthy here is that this is a teaching that Paul "received" from others. This implies it had been in existence for some time. Gary Habermas, noted expert on the Resurrection, gives numerous critical scholars give a surprisingly early date. "Concerning a more exact time, it is very popular to date this creed in the mid A.D. 30s."[115] Yet Paul is writing about A.D. 55—56. *This would place the origin of this teaching about Jesus' death, burial, resurrection, and appearances to hundreds of persons by conservative estimates within a few short years of the time they happened!*

Confirmation for the New Testament From the Basic Facts Position

Professor Habermas argues from what can be called the basic facts position. Beginning with the facts that almost all critical scholars of the New Testament agree upon, he argues that the best explanation is that Jesus lived, died, and rose from the dead—which is at the heart of the historicity of the New Testament. He lists "at least twelve separate facts [that] are agreed to be knowable history" by "practically all critical scholars."[116] These include that (1) Jesus died by crucifixion, (2) was buried, (3) His disciples despaired, (4) the tomb was later found empty, (5) the disciples believed they later saw literal appearances of Jesus, (6) they were transformed from doubters to bold proclaimers of His resurrection, (7) this message was the center of their early preaching, (8) they preached this in Jerusalem shortly after it happened, (9) the church was born and grew rapidly, (10) Sunday was their primary day of worship, (11) James was converted from skepticism to belief in the resurrection of Jesus, and (12) a few years later Paul was converted, believing he had seen the resurrected Christ.

On this basis it is argued that no purely naturalistic theory explains all these facts and that the actual bodily resurrection of Jesus is the best explanation of all the facts. Furthermore, taking even four of these facts, which are accepted by virtually all critical scholars (1, 5, 6, and 12), the case can still be made that the literal resurrection of Christ is the best explanation of these four facts.[117]

Habermas concludes, "These core facts also provide the major positive evidence for Jesus' literal resurrection appearances. . . . Thus these core historical facts provide positive evidence which further verify the disciples' claims concerning Jesus' literal resurrection, especially in that these arguments have not been accounted for naturalistically."[118]

THE INTERNAL EVIDENCE FOR THE HISTORICITY OF THE GOSPELS

In addition to the strong external evidence via early dating, archaeological finds, and multiple eye-witness testimony, there are strong internal evidences for the authenticity of the Gospel records. Once the books are dated within the life-time of Jesus' immediate disciples, the question becomes moot as to who actually wrote them. In fact, there is no good reason not to accept the traditional authorship, well attested in early church history of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Be that as it may, the documents were composed by first-century disciples of Jesus who were eye-witnesses and contemporaries of the events. This being the case, let's look at the internal evidence for their authenticity.

Gospel Writers Made No Attempt to Harmonize their Accounts—Eyewitnesses offering truthful accounts rarely tell the same story word for word. Overlaps in testimony on crucial points are expected, but exactness on details is rare. This is exactly what we have in the Gospels. There is unanimity on the central facts about the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, along with significant but reconcilable differences on the details.

Sometimes there is even apparent contradiction from one account to another. For instance, there was one angel at the tomb in Matthew (28:2-3), and two in John (20:12). Mat. 27:5 says Judas hanged himself, but Acts affirms that he fell headlong and his bowels burst out (Acts 1:18). Matthew says Jesus healed two blind men (Mat. 9:27), and yet Luke 18:35f. says His cured one blind man. Even something as simple as the inscription on the cross reads four different ways in the four Gospels (cf. Mat. 27:37; Mark. 15:26; Luke 23:38; John19:19). Surely no writers in collusion would have allowed all these apparent contradictions in the record. While it has never been demonstrated that these are real contradictions,[119] this much seems certain: the writers were not conspiring together to tell a story that was not true.

Gospel Writers Included Passages that Placed Jesus in a Bad Light—Another internal evidence of authenticity is the fact that the Gospel writers did not hesitate to put in the record things that placed Jesus, to whom they were devoted, in a bad light. Among these are the fact that Jesus was called "a winebibber" (Mat. 11:19), a mad man (John 10:20), demon possessed (John 8:48), and that His brothers did not believe in Him (John 7:5). Surely no one trying to paint a good picture or tell a myth would have allowed this in the record of their great hero, to say nothing of the one whom they believed to be the Son of God.

Gospel Writers Left Difficult Passages in their Text—Even honest followers of Christ admit that it would be easier to defend Jesus' claims to be the Son of God had the text not contained some things Jesus said that are hard to explain. For example, if Jesus is really God, as the text records that He claimed to be (Mat. 27:63-64; John 5:23; 8:59; 10:30; 17:5), then why did they leave in Jesus' statement, "The Father is greater than I" (John 14:28), and "No one knows the time . . ." (Mat. 24:36)? Also, why did He rebuke the rich young ruler when he called Jesus "Good Master" and insist that only God was good (from whom He appeared to be disassociating Himself)?

Why also do they leave in the text those difficult passages which agnostics take to make Jesus look unwise, like cursing a fig tree for not having figs when it was not yet the season for figs? (Mat. 21:18f.). Why did they leave in the passages where Christ seems to say He was coming back to earth within a generation when He did not (Mat. 24:34), especially if one accepts, as most critics do, that this was not written until after the alleged prediction was already known to be false? The most plausible reason is because they were really reporting what He said and not what would make things look better, fit better, or make a better impression. In short, all these things argue for the truthfulness of the Gospel writers.

Gospel Writers Recorded Self-Incriminating Stories—Granted one or

more apostles wrote a Gospel or more (say Matthew and/or John), or even grant that they had a strong influence on a Gospel writer (like Paul on Luke or Peter on Mark their companions), then why did they leave self-incriminating things in the record, such as (1) all the disciples fell asleep when Jesus asked them to pray; (2) Peter was called "Satan" by Jesus (Mat. 16:23); (3) Peter denied the Lord three times (Luke 22:34); (4) when things got really tough (at the Crucifixion), all the disciples fled except one (Mark 14:50); (5) Peter cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest (Mark 14:47); and (6) in spite of repeated teaching that He would rise from the dead (John 2; Mat.12; 17), the disciples were doubtful and disbelieving when they heard of Jesus' resurrection? Again, the best explanation for these self-incriminating inclusions are that they really happened, and the Gospel writer is simply reporting the truth.

Gospel Writers Carefully Distinguished Jesus' Word from Their Own—Any literate young adult could take a black and white version of the Gospels and accurately put in the quotations marks around the words of Jesus, so carefully are they distinguished from their own words. The fact that all red letter editions of the Bible, with Jesus' words in red, are virtually identical illustrates how clear this distinction is. But why should the Gospel writers be so careful to distinguish Jesus' words from theirs if they were simply putting words in Jesus' mouth? This distinction demonstrates that, contrary to form and redaction criticism, they were really reporting, not creating, the words of Jesus.

Likewise, Paul made the same careful distinction in his epistles and in the book of Acts where Paul said, "In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: `It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35). And he said to the Corinthians, "To the married I give this command (*not I, but the Lord*).... Yet two verses later he wrote: "To the rest I say this (*I, not the Lord*).... (1 Cor. 7:10, 12 cf. 9:14; 11:23-25) [emphasis added].[120]

Gospel Writers Did Not Deny Their Testimony Under Persecution or Threat of Death—One sure-fire way to determine whether a person is telling the truth is to persecute or threaten to kill him unless he changes his view. It is well known that the early Christians, among whom were Gospel writers, were put in this situation repeatedly. Acts 4, 5, 7, and 8 are notable examples of this in the early church. Paul tells of his incredible woes for Christ:

Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches" (2 Cor. 11:24-28).

It is a psychological fact that few, if any, persons would endure these experiences for what he knew to be a lie.[121]

New Testament Writers Based their Record on Eyewitness Testimony —Surely if what the Gospel writers said was a fraud, pious or not, someone

would have cracked under this pressure and confessed that what he said was not true. But no one did. This in itself is a strong testimony to the truth of the Gospel records.

New Testament Events Based in Eye-Witness Testimony—Both Gospels and Acts give evidence of being based on eye-witness testimony.

> **John:** "The man who saw it [the crucifixion] has given testimony, and his testimony is true" (John 19:35). "This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true" (John 21:24).
>
> **Luke:** "Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. Therefore, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught" (Luke 1:1-4).
>
> **Book of Acts:** "God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact" (Acts 2:32). Peter and John replied, "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:19-20).We are witnesses of everything he did in the country of the Jews and Jerusalem. They killed him by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him from the dead on the third day and caused him to be seen" (Acts 10:39-40). "He [Jesus] was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all He appeared to me also . . ." (1 Cor. 15:3-8)—written A.D. 55—56.
>
> **Hebrews:** "How shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, *was confirmed to us by those who heard him* [emphasis added]. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will" (Heb. 2:3-4).

> **Peter:** "We did not follow cleverly invented stories [myths] when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). "To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's suffering and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed" (1 Peter 5:1).
>
> **1 John:** "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life (1 John 1:1).

Finally, the entire New Testament record contains many indications of an eyewitness account. The record has a lively immediacy that bespeaks of an eyewitness account. It reflects knowledge of first century places, persons, customs, topography, and geography. There are references to verifiable cities like Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and many other cities of first century Palestine, along with religious knowledge about Pharisees and Sadducees.

Luke provides verifiable historical reference points in Luke, something a writer of legend would not do. Luke refers to the Roman king alive when Jesus was born, Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1), to a census taken in Syria under Quirinius, and to numerous known Roman and Jewish leaders alive when Jesus began His ministry, including Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate, Herod, his brother Philip, Annas and Caiaphas the high priests, and John the Baptist (see Luke 3:1-2).

Non-Christian Sources Confirm Basic Gospel Facts—In addition to the biblical data, there are non-Christian sources for the life of Christ, including Tacitus, Suetonius, Thallus, the Jewish Talmud, and Josephus. The citations from them are contained in the excellent work of F. F. Bruce, noted English New Testament Scholar, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* and in Gary Habermas' *The Historical Jesus***.** Following Habermas, many important things can be ascertained from this text: (1) Jesus was worshiped by Christians. (2) Jesus introduced new teachings in Palestine. (3) He was crucified for His teachings. His teachings included (4) the fellowship of all believers, (5) the

importance of conversion, and (6) the importance of denying the gods of Greece. The Christians (7) worshiped Jesus and (8) lived according to His laws. Further, the followers of Jesus (9) believed they were immortal and were characterized by (10) contempt for death, (11) voluntary self-devotion, and (12) renunciation of material goods. Lucian thus gives one of the most informative accounts of Jesus and early Christianity outside the New Testament, despite being one of its most vocal critics.[122]

Habermas notes that the writings of the earliest non-Christian sources on Christ are approximately twenty to 150 years after Jesus' death which is quite early by the standards of ancient historiography. What is more, "at least seventeen non-Christian writings record more than fifty details concerning the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus, plus details concerning the earliest church"[123] And if one includes the non-biblical Christian sources as well, then there are some 129 facts about the life of Christ listed outside the New Testament.[124] This is a powerful confirmation from early extra-biblical sources for the historicity of the New Testament.

Objections to the Historicity of the New Testament

In spite of the overwhelming evidence for the historicity of the New Testament, some continue to cast doubt on its reliability. The most often reasons given are two: the impossibility to know the past, and the unreliability of miraculous accounts.

Is History Knowable?

Some critical scholars have questioned whether history in general is knowable. This objection from the historical relativists has been answered in detail elsewhere.[125] Two basic points can be mentioned here. First, it is self-

defeating to claim all views of history are incorrect. One would have to know a correct view of history in order to say this. Second, human history is based on the same basic principles by which scientists construct scientific history which they claim is valid. The numerous documents and witnesses are sufficient to construct a reliable history of Jesus' words and deeds. Third, if the history of Jesus is unknowable, then so is all of history unknowable since the historical evidence is much greater for Christ than for others from the ancient world.

Are Miraculous Accounts Unreliable?

Since the credibility of miracles has already been addressed earlier (in chapter 5), it will only be discussed briefly here. First of all, no one has ever offered a definitive argument showing miracles are impossible. Every attempt simply begs the question by defining miracle as impossible. Second, if a theistic God exists, then miracles are possible. For a miracle is a special act of God, and if a theistic God exists who has performed the supernatural act of creating a world out of nothing, then other miracles are thereby made possible. Third, it follows, then, that the only way to disprove the possibility of miracles is to disprove the existence of God. And despite all attempts to cast doubt on the existence of God, no one has yet provided an absolute disproof of the existence of God. All attempts to do this have fallen short of the mark.[126]

Furthermore, there is an inconsistency in the critics' arguments. For ancient historians accept the reliability of other ancient accounts of events that contain miracle claims in them. As Habermas notes, "Ancient histories regularly recounted supernatural reports of all sorts, including omens and portends, prophecies, healing miracles, various sorts of divine intervention, as well as demonic activity." For example, "in his widely recognized account of Alexander the Great, Plutarch begins by noting Alexander's likely descent from Hercules. Later Alexander talked with a priest who claimed to be the son of the god Ammon and then with Ammon himself." Indeed, "near the end of his life, Alexander took almost every unusual event to be supernatural, surrounding

himself with diviners and others who foretold the future."[127] Inclusion of alleged miracles is also part of the reports of Tacitus and Suetonius whose accounts are widely accepted by modern historians as containing reliable historical accounts.

Do Unusual Claims Demand Unusual Evidence?

A kindred criticism, though less obvious, is the oft repeated claim that "unusual claims demand unusual evidence." The New Testament makes unusual claims. Hence, it demands unusual evidence. However, there are several serious flaws with this claim as it bears on the historicity of the New Testament.

First of all, the word "unusual" is ambiguous. Does it mean supernatural? If so, then it begs the question, for it amounts to saying "a miraculous claim demands miraculous evidence." But if one provided miraculous evidence for that, then the objector to ask for miraculous evidence for that, and so on to infinity. But in this case, one could never verify anything by a miraculous claim. However, this begs the question.

Second, if "unusual" simply means merely more than usual, then the New Testament meets the challenge, since there are more manuscripts, earlier ones, more accurately copies ones, with more witnesses, and more corroborated by external evidence for the New Testament than any other book from antiquity.

Third, the word "unusual" is imprecise. How unusual does the evidence have to be? Who determines its meaning? What are the objective criteria for unusualness? Are these applied consistently with other unusual claims in history and other disciplines? For example, the feats of Napoleon were very unusual. [128] Few before or after him ever attained them. Yet the basic historicity of his exploits have not been rejected because we have the normal means of documents and witnesses to consider them historical.

Fourth, many views in modern science that are very unusual have been accepted by no less evidence than the historicity of the New Testament. The Big

Bang theory is a case in point. By the standards operating in modern science, the explosion of the universe out of nothing was a highly unusual event.[129] Yet only normal scientific evidence has been required to believe it, such as the Second Law of Thermodynamics, an expanding universe, etc. (see chapter 2).

Finally, many purely natural events are highly unusual. For example, virtually everything in nature contracts as it gets colder. Yet when water reaches thirty-two degrees Fahrenheit (0 degrees Celsius), the molecules crystallize into a structure that expands instead of contracts. But scientists do not require highly unusual evidence that this is so but just the regular observation demanded to establish other natural events.

In short, the claim that "unusual events demand unusual evidence" fails to undermine the historicity of the New Testament. For there is more than ample evidence for the miraculous claims it contains.

Do Religious Motives Negate Doing Credible History?

This question has been treated more fully elsewhere.[130] It is sufficient to mention here that all such objections either beg the question or are self-defeating. Holocaust victims can be charged with having prejudice, but who provides a better testimony than an eyewitness of the actual event. Indeed, other ancient writers revealed religious purposes in their writing, but does not hinder historians from concluding basic facts about the past from their writings. Everyone has a purpose for writing and makes value judgments in them. But this in itself does not disqualify them as good historians. Finally, as shown above, where the Gospel writers overlap with secular history, they have repeatedly been shown to be accurate, despite their religious views.

Do We Have the Exact Words of Jesus?

Even granting the general reliability of the New Testament, some insist that we do not have the exact words of Jesus therein. In the minds of some, this weakens the case for the historical objectivity of the New Testament. The

arguments for this view will be stated and evaluated.

Jesus' Aramaic Words Were Translated into Greek—The first objection is that Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic, as is indicated by the fact that some words are preserved in that language (cf. Mat. 27:46). But the New Testament is written in Greek. Hence, it is already a translation of Jesus' words.

In response, a couple observations are in order. First, even if Jesus spoke in Aramaic, it does not follow that Gospel writers did not faithfully translate them. Second, some scholars argue that since Jesus was at least bilingual, He may have spoken to His disciples in Greek.[131] In which case no translation would be necessary. Third, the fact that Jesus *occasionally* spoke in Aramaic, as He did a few words from the cross (Mat. 27:46), does not prove that He *regularly* spoke it in His discourses. Fourth, as already noted, even if Jesus gave His discourses in Aramaic, historical reliability does not depend on having those exact words (*ipsissima verba*), as long as the Greek translation preserves the same meaning *(ipsissima vox*). And, contrary to speculations of the critics, which are based on questionable presuppositions, no factual evidence exists showing the meaning of Jesus is not preserved in the Gospel records. Finally, since the earliest copies of the Gospel known are in Greek, and since it was the Greek written original that was inspired (2 Tim. 3:16), it does not matter if He spoke the words originally in Aramaic.

Parallel Gospel Accounts do not Contain the exact Words—It is also noted by critics that Jesus' words spoken on the same occasion differ from Gospel to Gospel. Hence, it is argued that they cannot be the exact words He spoke.

In response, this objection also fails to prove its point for several reasons.

First of all, in most (if not all) cases, one account may simply be giving a more complete account of Jesus' words than the other. For example, in Peter's

famous confession we may simply have Matthew recording more than Mark and Luke less. Matthew recorded, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mat. 16:16). Mark's account simply gives part of it, namely, "You are the Christ" (Mark 8:29). Luke wrote [You are] "The Christ of God" (Luke 9:20).

Second, other differences in the Gospel accounts can be explained by the reasonable assumptions that Jesus said (1) similar things on different occasions, (2) more on a given occasion than what one or even all Gospel writers record, or (3) the same thing more than one way on the same occasion (cf. Mark 10:23, 24).

Third, in any event, the exact words are not necessary to give a historically reliable account, as long as the same meaning is conveyed.

Long Discourses Could not Have Been Remembered Years Later—There are many long discourses of Jesus recorded in the Gospels and Luke recorded in Acts (2, 7, 10, 17). These include the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5-7), the Parables (Mat. 13), the denunciation of the Jewish leaders (Mat. 23), the Mount Olivet Discourse (Mat. 24-25), the Upper Room discourse (John 14-17), and His high priestly prayer (John 17). It is argued that it is highly unlikely that these could have been remembered word-for-word a generation or more later when they were recorded.

In response, the critics overlook some important facts here. First, their dates for the Gospels are too late (see above). Evidence places the writings closer to the events than previously thought, even within ten years according to some liberal critics (like John Robinson). Second, memories were more highly developed in this preliterate culture, making it feasible that much of the material was memorized. Third, even today many persons have memorized much more than this, some even whole Gospels. Fourth, Matthew who has most of the long discourses was a record keeper by vocation (a tax collector). He may have kept records of Jesus' exact words that were available for others just as the earlier

Christian writer Papias said he did.[132] Dr. Luke was an educated man who researched the matter carefully (Luke 1:1-4) and had access to any eyewitness records that were available. Fifth, Jesus promised supernatural activation of the disciple's memories, saying, "But the Counselor, *the Holy Spirit*, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" (John 14:26, emphasis added). Finally, even if these long discourses were summaries and paraphrases of Jesus' exact words, there is no evidence to indicate that they are not accurate. In fact, as we have seen above, all the evidence is to the contrary.

John Records Jesus Saying Different Things—There is little doubt that the Gospel of John records different sayings than the other Gospels. Jesus' famous "I am" statements occur only in John (e.g., 4:26, 6:35, 8:12, 58, 10:9, 11, 11:25, 14:6). "Verily, verily" (or "truly, truly") occurs only in John (cf. 1:51, 3:3, 5, 11, 5:19, 24, 25, 6:26, 32, 47, 53, 8:34, 51, 58, 10:1, 7, 12:24, 13:16, 20, 21, 38, 14:12, 16:20, 23, 21:18). But there is great doubt that this in any way undermines the reliability of the Gospel record.[133]

In response, there are good reasons for the differences in John. John's deviations from the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) can be explained largely by the location (Judean), date (early and later ministry), and nature (many private conversations) of Jesus' sayings. And the "I am" claims can be understood as shorter, simpler statements Jesus made to those who did not at first understand Him. Indeed, the fact that John's account is so intimate, so fresh, and so detailed argues strongly for its authenticity.[134]

The "verily, verily" statements have parallels in both Mark and Matthew who say, "Verily I say unto you" (Mat. 26:34 and Mark 14:30). The doubling may have been for emphasis.[135] Further, when John says Jesus used "verily, verily," he is reporting Jesus' statements on different occasions than events in the synoptic gospels. During His ministry Jesus avoided making explicit public claims to be the Messiah. Yet He did not hesitate to do so in private to the

woman at the well (John 4:25-26). For all of these are things Jesus said on different occasions than in the synoptic gospels. There are no instances where Jesus said only one "verily" in the synoptics and John doubled it. Indeed, it is the only Gospel that claims to be written by an eyewitness apostle (John 21:24-25). Carson's conclusion is correct: "It is altogether plausible that Jesus sometimes spoke in nothing less than what we think of as “Johannine style,” and that John's style was to some degree influenced by Jesus himself." Thus, "when all the evidence is taken together, it is not hard to believe that when we listen to the voice of the Evangelist in his description of what Jesus said, we are listening to the voice of Jesus himself."[136]

In summation, there is no good evidence that the Gospels do not convey to us the same truths that Jesus spoke, even if it could be shown that in some cases His exact words are not reported. What is certain is this: The Gospel writers did not *create* the teachings and actions of Jesus, but rather they *reported* them. Even if some (or all) were originally spoken in Aramaic and then translated into Greek, they are translated accurately by eyewitnesses and contemporaries of the events whose lives and memories were dramatically impacted and changed by Him and whose memories were supernaturally activated by His Spirit. Further, the historicity of what they said is corroborated by multiple accounts, archaeological discoveries, by early manuscript evidence, and by the morality and dedication of the writers. No such combination of evidence exists for any other book from the ancient world.

Conclusion

The historicity of the New Testament is based on more solid evidence than that for any other events from the ancient world. For no other events are based on more manuscripts, that are more accurately copied, that were written by more people, who were eye-witnesses or contemporaries of the events. Were it not for an ungrounded antisupernatural bias of the negative critics (see chapters 3 and 4 above), the Gospel accounts would be unquestioned as to their historicity

—which indeed they were among Bible scholars for some 1800 years after the events.

By contrast, there are few serious historical challenges to the basic facts of the life and exploits of Alexander the Great. Yet there are no contemporary sources available—none. One hundred years later there are only fragments. And it is 300-500 years later before we have several histories. By stark contrast within twenty to thirty years later after the events, we have documents on the basic facts of the life, death, resurrection, and basic teaching of Christ. And even by the most critical dates, we have the entire New Testament written within the life-time of eyewitnesses and contemporaries of the events. This means that we do have reliable accounts of the words and works of Jesus. This being so, it behooves every truth seeker to read them carefully and to heed them completely. For Jesus said, “the word that I have spoken will judge him on the last day” (John 12:48).

CHAPTER 7: IN THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCUMENTS JESUS CLAIMED TO BE GOD

Introduction

SINCE A THEISTIC GOD EXISTS (chapter 3), then miracles are possible (chapter 4). Since miracles are possible, then they can be used to confirm a message from God (chapter 5). And since the New Testament documents are historically reliable (chapter 6), we can now examine them to see what they say and show about the central figure, Jesus of Nazareth. For, contrary to the critics, they cannot be discounted because they contain miracles. As C. S. Lewis puts it, "If we admit God, must we admit miracles? Indeed, indeed, you have no security against it. That is the bargain."[137]

THE OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND FOR CHRIST'S CLAIMS TO DEITY

The claim for Christ's deity comes long before He was born. There were numerous Old Testament predictions about the Messiah (see in Mat. 5:17; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Heb.10:7) that also claimed deity for Him:

Psalm 2:7 declares, "The LORD has said to me, You are *My Son*...."

Psalm 45:6-7 adds, "Your throne *O God* is forever and ever" (which was used to show His deity in Heb. 1:8).

Psalm 110:1 asserts, "The LORD said to my *Lord*, Sit at My right hand till I make your enemies your footstool" (which was cited by Jesus in His claim to be the Messiah in Mat. 22:43-44).

Proverbs 30:4 speaks of God's Son: "What is His name, and what is *His Son's* name, if you know."

Isa. 9:6 declares, "His name shall be called wonderful Counselor, *Mighty God*, Father of Eternity."

Isa. 63:7-10 mentioned all three members of the Christian Trinity: "LORD [the Father] has bestowed on us. And the *Angel [Messenger] of His presence* [the Son] saved them [cf. Exod. 3:2-14]. . . . Yet they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit [the Holy Spirit].

In Zech. 1:12 the Son speaks to the Father: "The *Angel [Messenger] of the LORD* answered and said, O LORD of hosts."

Zech.12:10 records, "And I *[the LORD*] will pour on the house of David...; then they will look on *Me [the LORD] whom they have pierced;* they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son." This is applied to Christ in the New Testament (cf. John 19:37).

Zech.14:16 calls the Messiah God: "All the nations which came against

> Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, *the LORD* of host, and to keep the feast of Tabernacles."

The emphasized words in the text indicate that the Messiah was not only to be God's "Son," but God himself. He is called Yahweh [the LORD], a term used only of God in the Old Testament. He was the "Angel of the Lord" who was worshiped by Moses and called Himself the great "I AM" (in Exod. 3:14). He is distinguished as a distinct person from God the Father in several passages, even carrying on a conversation with Him (Psa. 45:6-7, 111:1; Zech.1:12). He was called the "Might God" (Isa. 9:6) and yet the one who would be "pierced" and die as an "only son." Clearly, the Messiah was to be more than a man; He was also to be God Himself.

JESUS' CLAIMS TO DEITY

Not only did the Old Testament speak of the deity of Christ, but Christ Himself repeatedly it in the New Testament.

Christ Claimed to be Messiah-God

According to the historically reliable documents of the New Testament (see chapter 6), Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be the Jewish Messiah. Since the expected Jewish Messiah was to be God, Jesus' claim was thereby a claim to be God. That first century Jews had this expectation is confirmed both inside the New Testament and outside. Inside, Jesus was announced by the angel to be "Immanuel, God with us" (Mat. 1:23). The wise men "worshiped Him" (Mat. 2:11). John the Baptist claimed to be heralding "the Lord (Yahweh)" (Luke 3:2-6). Gabriel announced to Mary that He would be called "the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Elizabeth said Mary was "the mother of my Lord" (Luke1:43). What is more, Gabriel said Jesus would be called "the Son of the highest" and "the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32).

A similar phrase also used by the Jewish group near the Dead Sea around the time of Christ. The "Son of God" Text (4Q246) from *The Apocryphon of Daniel* reads: "[Also His Son] will be called great, and be designated by His name. He will be called the Son of God, they will call Him the Son of the Most High. Their kingdom will be an eternal kingdom, and all their paths will be righteous."[138] *The Messianic Apocalypse* (4Q521) add that His claims to deity will be confirmed by miracles: "For He will honor the pious upon the throne of His eternal kingdom, release the captives, open the eyes of the blind, lifting up those who are oppressed. For He shall heal the critically wounded, He shall raise the dead, He shall bring good news [the gospel] to the poor."[139]

Not only was the Messiah-God expected, but Jesus clearly and emphatically claimed to be that Messiah. To the woman of Samaria who said to

Him, “I know the Messiah is coming,” Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He” (John 4:25-26). When Jesus was under oath before the high priest, he said to Jesus, “‘Are you the Christ [Messiah], the Son of the blessed?’ And Jesus said, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’ Then the high priest said, ‘What further need do we have of witness? You have heard the blasphemy!’” (Mark 14:61-62). This also is a clear indication that Jesus’ often used self-description as “the Son of Man” was a Messianic title of deity (cf. Dan. 7:13). And since Jesus often used this title of himself and His mission (cf. Mark 10:45), it too is a confirmation of His claim to be the Messiah-God.

Christ’s Claimed to be the "I AM” [of Ex. 3:14].

God revealed Himself to Moses as the “I AM,” which is a rare self-description of God by Himself (Ex. 3:14). Yet Jesus did not hesitate to boldly proclaim to the Jews, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58). Their response clearly indicated that they understood His claim to be God in human flesh! “They took up stones to throw at Him,” an appropriate act for one whom they believed had committed blasphemy by claiming to be God. When Jesus made a similar claim in John 10:30 to be one with the Father, the Jews replied, “For a good work we do not stone you, but for blasphemy, and because you, being a Man make yourself God” (10:33).

Jesus Claimed to be Able to Forgive Sins

According to Jewish belief, only God could forgive sins. Knowing this, “Jesus said, Son, your sins are forgiven you.” When He had done this, “The scribes replied, ‘Who can forgive sins but God alone?’” (Mark 2:5-7). As noted above, Jesus’ response revealed another claim to deity, namely, that He was “The Son of Man,” a title applied to the Messiah-God in the Old Testament (Dan. 7:13).

Jesus Claimed He Should be Honored Just as God is Honored

While the Bible teaches that honor should be given to whom honor is due, even to those in political authority (Rom.13:1-7). But never does it say that a human being should be honored "just as the Father [God] is honored. But this precisely what Jesus claimed for himself. He told the Jews, "All should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father" (John 5:23).

Jesus Accepted worship on Numerous Occasions

The Jewish Scriptures declared clearly, "You shall worship no other god for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Ex. 34:14). Jesus rebuked Satan with a quote from Deut. 6:13, saying, "You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve" (Mat. 4:10). The Bible forbids worshiping anyone but God (Exod. 20:1-4; Deut. 5:6-9). Human beings refused worship (Acts 14:15). Even Angels refuse to be worship (Rev. 22:8-9). Yet Jesus accepted worship on numerous occasions. He accepted worship from (1) the mother of James and John (Mat. 20:20), (2) the Gerasene demoniac (Mark 5:6), (3) a blind man (John 9:38), (4) doubting Thomas (John 20:28), (5) the women at the tomb (Mat. 28:9), (6) a Canaanite woman (Mat. 15:25), (7) His disciples (Mat. 14:33), (8) a healed leper (Mat. 8:2), and (9) a rich young ruler (Mat. 9:18). Never once did Jesus rebuked anyone who worshiped Him. He even commended people for worshiping Him and acknowledging His deity (John 20:29 cf. Mat. 16:17).

Jesus Put His Words on the Level with God's

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said, "Till heaven and earth pass away" (Mat. 5:18), not the smallest part of God's Word would pass away. Yet later Jesus placed His own words on the same level with God's, saying, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will by no means pass away" (Mat.

24:35). He added elsewhere, “He that rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

Jesus Commanded His Disciples to Pray in His Name

Again, in the monotheistic Jewish context, prayer was an act of worship, and the Scriptures declared clearly, “Do not worship any other god” (Exod. 34:14). Yet Jesus called on His disciples to pray in His name, saying, “Whatever you ask in My name that will I do, that the father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13). He even accepted prayer to himself from the first Christian martyr who said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59).

Jesus Accepted the Titles of Deity.

Not only did Jesus use the titles of deity of himself, but He accepted them when others used them of Him. When Thomas said to Jesus, “My Lord and My God (John 20:28),[140] Jesus blessed him, saying, “Thomas, because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (v. 29). When “Simon Peter answered and said, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God’ Jesus said to him, ‘blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven’” (Mat. 16:17-18).

OTHERS CLAIMED JESUS WAS GOD

The Old Testament predicted that the Messiah-God would come, and Jesus claimed to fulfill that prediction. Not only did Jesus claim that He was God in numerous ways, but the Gospels record that others also claimed that He was God.

The Voice of the Father from Heaven Claimed Christ was God

The Gospels record three times that the voice of God the Father proclaimed Jesus was His unique Son. First, at His baptism the Father said, "This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat. 3:17). Next, at Jesus' transfiguration the voice of the Father declared, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mat. 17:5). Finally, just before the Cross, the Father responded to Jesus' prayer, "Father, glorify Your name," by saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again" (John 12:28). Indeed, in His high priestly prayer Jesus said, "Father, glorify me together with yourself, with the glory which I had with you before the world was" (John 17:5). Yet God had said, "I will not give my glory to another" (Isa. 48:11). Clearly, Jesus was claiming and the Father accepting that the Son too was God.

Angels Claimed Jesus was God

The angel announce to Mary that "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David" (Luke 1:32). Here again, Jesus was acclaimed as both Messiah and God. The angel also said to Mary, "The Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). Likewise, the angels announced to the shepherds, "For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).

Demons Recognized Christ's Deity

Not only did the good angels know who Jesus was, so did the evil ones. One demon said to Jesus, “What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come torment us before our time? (Mat. 8:29).

OTHER HUMAN'S RECOGNIZED CHRIST'S DEITY

Thomas said, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). John said, "In the beginning was the Word; the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Peter said to Jesus, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Mat.16:16). Paul proclaimed, "Christ, who is over all, the eternally blessed God" (Rom. 9:5). He also called Him "the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ" (Titus 2:13). He said, "by Him all things were created. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things and in Him all things consist [are held together]" Col. 1:16-17). "For in Him all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily (Col. 2:9). The writer of Hebrews declared that "Christ being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power" (1:3). "For to which of the angels did He ever say: You are My Son" (1:5). And "When He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: Let all the angels of God worship Him" (1:6). "But to the Son He says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever'" (1:8).

According to the reliable New Testament documents (see chapter 6), not only did Jesus claim to be God, but so did the angels, good and bad, God the Father Himself, and Jesus' immediate followers who included former skeptic (like Thomas) and even former unbelievers and antagonists (like Paul; see Acts 7-9).

SOME OBJECTIONS ANSWERED

In spite of the overwhelming evidence that Jesus claimed to be God, there are some who, on the basis of taking a few verses out of context, have attempted to raise doubts about Jesus' claims to deity. However, when each verse is understood in its proper setting, it becomes evident that Jesus is not denying His deity. Indeed, some of the verses turn out to be an affirmation of His deity.

Matthew 19:17: Jesus said to the rich young ruler, "Why call me good? There is none good but God." Some wrongly imply that Jesus is denying that He is God.

Response: However, this is not a denial of anything; it is a question. Jesus is simply asking the brash young man if he realized the implications of his statement. He was saying, "Do you realize what you are saying? Are you calling me God? Obviously, the young man did not realize the implications of his words. This is evident from his other statement that he had kept all the commandments. Jesus made him painfully aware of his problem, and he pointed to his real god, money.

John 14:28: Jesus said, "The Father is greater than I." Out of context this may seem to be a denial of His deity.

Response: However, Jesus was not only God; He was also a man. And as a human being, the Father was greater than He was. Further, Jesus is the second Person of the Godhead. He is the Son of God. As such, Jesus held a lesser office in the Godhead than the Father. In that sense, the Father was greater than Jesus was in office but not in nature. Just as my father has a greater position in the family than I, yet we both have the same human nature, even so the Father is greater in office than the Son, but they are the same in nature. Both are God.

Mark 13:32: Jesus said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father." How could Jesus be God who knew everything when Jesus said here that He did not know everything? He did not know the time of His Second Coming.

Response: As God, Jesus knew the time of His return. But as man He did not. Jesus has two natures. As God He is infinite, but as man He is finite. As man, Jesus "grew in wisdom" (Luke 2:52). But as God His "understanding is infinite" (Psa. 147:5 cf. Rom. 11:33). So, as a human being Christ did not know the time of His Second Coming, but as God He knew everything from all eternity (Isa. 46:10).

Colossians 1:15: Paul says, "He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (Col. 1:15). It is objected that Jesus was the first one born or created.

Response: But this is a prime example of taking a text out of its context. In context (vs. 16-17), Jesus is the Creator and Sustainer of all things. Further, "firstborn" is the one who has priority by virtue of His position. So, Jesus is the first over creation, not the first in creation. Contrary to the objection, this is actually a strong passage on Christ's deity.

Revelation 3:14: Here Christ is called "the beginning of the creation of

God." To the untrained this many seem like a claim that He was the first one created.

Response: However, this is not so for several reasons. First, it would be contradictory to clear biblical teaching that Jesus created all things (John 1:3; Heb. 1:3; Col. 1:16). Second, a similar term "first" is used of the one called the "Lord God" who is "the Almighty" (1:8, 18). Third, the term "Beginning" is also used of the Father who is God (21:5-6). So, Jesus is the absolute Beginning, the eternal one. He is the Beginner of all things but not the beginning of any created thing (cf. John 1:3).

Objection that it is a Contradiction: Some argue that to be both God and man is a contradiction. It is said to violate the Law of Non-Contradiction which affirms that to be both God and not God (but human) at the same time is a contradiction.

Response: This is a misunderstanding of Christ's two nature and of the Law of Non-Contradiction. First, it is a misunderstanding of the Law of Non-Contradiction which states that He would have to be both God and man not only at the same time but *in the same sense*. But Jesus is not God in the same sense that He is man. Second, Jesus has two natures, one is divine and another is human. One can be both a father and a husband at the same time, but not in the same sense. Jesus has two different and distinct nature, and He is God in His divine nature and man in His human nature.

John 17:3: Jesus prayed to the Father, saying, "this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." If the Father is the only God, then how can Christ also be God?

Response: He said the Father is the only true God, but he did not say that only the Father is God. Gen. 7:23 says God destroyed the world, saying, "only Noah was left." Yet it adds in the same sentence, "and those who

were with him in the ark." So, using "only" of the Noah does not mean he was the only one in the ark. Likewise, in John 8:9 it says "Jesus was left alone" as though he was the only one there. Yet it adds in the same breath "with the woman" who had been taken in adultery. In brief, saying the Father is the only true God did not mean that only the Father is God. Indeed, the Bible says repeatedly that Jesus is God (Rom. 9:5; Heb. 1:8; Titus 2:13; Col. 1:16; 2:9).

John 10:34: Jesus said, "You are gods," but clearly He could not have mean this in absolute sense for he was citing from Psalm 82 which was speaking of persons (probably judges) who had derived their power from God. So, they were God only in a derivative sense, not an absolute sense.

Response: It is true that Jesus used the word "god" (Hebrew: *Elohim*) which can and sometimes does mean an individual who is less than God. But this misses the point of His argument which is an *a fortiori* argument (meaning "with the greater force"). He is saying something like this: "If human judges can be called "god" in some derivative sense of the term because they stand in the place of God, then how much more can the Son of God be called God in an absolute sense (as all the above verses showed). This fits perfectly with other text which claim that Jesus pre-existed (Jn. 1:1-3; 17:5; Heb. 1:6); that he was worshiped by angels (Heb. 1:6); that He created angels (Col. 1:16), and that He created all things (Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16). All of these are things that only God in the absolute sense can do.

Summing It All Up

Since God exists (chapter 3), then miracles *are* possible (chapter 4). Therefore, miracles can be used to confirm a claim from God (chapter 5). Since

the New Testament documents are historically reliable (chapter 6), then Jesus really claimed to be God almighty in human flesh (chapter 7). He did this in numerous and repeated ways (shown above). And His immediate followers made the same claim for Him. This being the case, it remains only to see if there is a miraculous confirmation of Jesus' claim to be God. This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 8: JESUS' CLAIM TO BE GOD WAS CONFIRMED BY A UNIQUE SET OF MIRACLES

SINCE GOD EXISTS (chapter 3), MIRACLES ARE POSSIBLE (chapter 4). Since miracles are possible, then they can be used to confirm a message from God (chapter 5). The New Testament documents are historically reliable (chapter 6). And these documents inform us that Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be God in human flesh (chapter 7). In view of this, we must look again at these same historically reliable documents to see if there was divine confirmation of Jesus' claim to be God. As we do, we will see that there is a convergence of three sets of unparalleled and unprecedented miracles in connection with Jesus' clam that confirm Him to be the divine Son of the one and only God!

Jesus was Confirmed to be God by Supernatural Prophecy

A miracle is a divine intervention into the natural world that produces an unusual event that would not have occurred by natural laws (see chapter 4). Such an event can be used to confirm a message from God. Indeed, both in the Old and New Testaments this was one of the primary purposes of miracles (chapter 5).

The Purpose of Miracles in the Old Testament

Moses was given miraculous powers so "that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their fathers—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob—has appeared to you' " (Exod. 4:1–5). Later, Moses said to Korah and his rebellious followers, "This is how you will know that the LORD has sent me to do all these things and that it was not my idea" (Num. 16:5, 28-30, 33).

Elijah was miraculously confirmed the same way when he prayed, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command" (1 Kings 18:36).

The Purpose of Miracles According to the New Testament

From the very beginning of Jesus' ministry miracles were used to confirm His Messianic claims. Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (John 3:2). Indeed, Jesus Himself said to the paralytic, "That you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins, . . . I say to you arise take up your bed, and go your way to your house" (Mark 2:10-11). When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask Jesus whether He was the Messiah, Jesus' answer was in essence: Look at the miracles I am doing (Luke 7:20–22).

We have seen (in chapter 5), that the characteristics of a truly supernatural event used to confirm a message from God included the following:

(1) It must have been a truly supernatural event not explained in a purely natural way.

(2) There must have been multiple miraculous events so as to eliminate the possibility of a fluke.

(3) The miracles needed to be made in connection with some truth claim in the name of God. In this way it could be known that it was a confirmation of the truth claim for God.

(4) The miracles must be unique for, as Hume pointed out, miracles cannot confirm opposing claims to be true.

(5) The predictive element is a special confirmation of a miracle. Predictions made and fulfilled were a special indication of their supernatural claim. This predictive element was evident in the miracle

of Moses with the Egyptians and of Elijah on Mt. Carmel. It was also evident in the life of Christ in many ways.

Jesus was Confirmed to be God by Supernatural Events

According to *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* edited by Professor Barton Payne, there were nearly 100 predictions about the first coming of the Messiah in the Old Testament. All of them were supernaturally fulfilled by Christ. Here are a many of them that predicted Jesus would be:

(1) the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15),

(2) from the line of Adam's son Seth (Gen. 4:26),

(3) through Noah's son Shem (Gen. 9:26),

(4) by the descendants of Abraham (Gen. 12:3), through his son Isaac (Gen. 26:3),

(5) by the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10),

(6) a son of David (2 Sam. 7:12f. cf. Jer. 23:5-6),

(7) who would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14),

(8) in the city of Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2),

(9) be heralded by a forerunner (Isa. 40:3),

(10) would suffer and die for His people (Isa. 53),

(11) about A.D. 33 (Dan. 9),[141]

(12) would rise from the dead (Ps. 2, 16),

(13) in one chapter (Isa. 53) alone there are at least twenty predictions about the Messiah:

(14) He would grow up gradually (2a),

(15) He was not outwardly beautiful (2b),

(16) He was despised and rejected by men (3a),

(17) He was a man of sorrow (3b),

(18) He bore our grief (4a),

(19) He carried our sorrows (4b),

(20) He was smitten and afflicted by God (4c),

(21) He was wounded for our transgressions (5),

(22) He bore our iniquity (6),

(23) He suffered like a lamb (7),

(24) He was cut off from the land of the living (8a),

(25) He was stricken for the Jewish people (8b),

(26) He died with the wicked (9a),

(27) He was buried with the rich (9b),

(28) He was sinless (9c),

(29) He was bruised by God (10a),

(30) His soul was made an offering for sin (10a),

(31) He came to life again from the dead (10b),

(32) He will justify many by His death (11),

(33) He poured out His soul unto death (12a),

(34) He prayed for sinners as He was dying (12b).

There are many reasons that this prediction was intended about an individual Messiah and not of a suffering nation of Israel, as some have claimed: (1) the singular pronoun (he, his, him) is used fifty-seven times of Him as an individual; (2) when Israel or others are mentioned it is always in the plural ("our," "us," "them," "many," and "my people"; (3) the predictions were not true about Israel since they were not sinless, and they did not die as a nation, bearing the sins of others, and (4) the Rabbis before the time of Christ consistently took this passage as a reference to the coming Jewish Messiah.[142]

Several things should be observed about the above Messianic prophecies that make them unique: (1) they were made hundreds of years in advance,[143]

(2) they were clear and specific, (3) there were numerous predictions, and (4) they were fulfilled 100% successfully. This is not true of any alleged prophecies of any other religious leader known to mankind.

Jesus not only supernaturally fulfilled prophecies, but He also made prophecies. The biggest one will be discussed below, namely, the prediction of His own resurrection from early in His ministry on (Mat. 12:40, 17:22–23, 20:18–19; John 2:19–22). He predicted the resurrection as a "sign" (miracle) of His claims (Mat. 12:39–40). Once Jesus said in advance of a miracle that it would be evidence of His claim to be the Messiah: "'But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' He said to the paralytic, 'I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.'" Jesus also made an amazing predictive prophecy about the destruction of Jerusalem nearly forty years in advance. Matthew records that "Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Mat. 24:1-2). This was literally fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans beginning in A.D. 70.

Jesus was Confirmed to be God by Supernatural Events He Performed

Jesus' life was supernatural from beginning to end. He had a supernatural conception (Mat. 1:23). He performed over sixty recorded supernatural events which included healing incurable diseases (Mat. 8), curing a person born blind (John 9), walking on water (John 6), turning water into wine (John 2), multiplying loaves and fish (John 6), and raising the dead (John 11). These are unprecedented and unparalleled events. There are no multiple contemporary and eye-witness accounts of anything else like these in the annals of history. And these were done in the context of His claim to be the Messiah, the Son of God (see chapter 7).

Jesus was Confirmed by a Supernatural Sinless Life

Not only did Jesus perform miracles, but His life was a miracle. For the same historically reliable record that informs us that He performed numerous miracles also informs us that He lived a sinless life. Consider the testimony of friend and foe. Jesus not only had an apologetic; He was an apologetic. When His opponents could not resist the irrefutable logic of Jesus, they turned to an attack on His character: "We are not born of fornication" (John 8:41), they said. They added later, "Now we know that You have a demon" (8:52). Jesus' answer was straight and to the point: "Which of you convicts me of sin" (v. 46). In short, the evidence for Jesus' impeccable life demonstrates that His testimony was true. [144]

As a backdrop for understanding sinless character, we need to remember that He was completely human. He had a human mother (Mat. 1; Luke 2), a human conception, a human prenatal life, a human childhood (Luke 2), a human adulthood, human relatives, human friends, human emotions (John 11), and a human death (Heb. 5:7-8). Yet He lived a superhuman life—one without sin (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21; 2 Peter 1:19).

Jesus' Sinlessness Was Confirmed by Those Who Knew Him Best.

The apostles and immediate disciples of Christ affirmed His sinlessness. The writer of Hebrews who knew the twelve apostles (Heb. 2:3-4) declared, "For we . . . have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Peter, a leader among the twelve apostles said, "Christ [is] a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:19). "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth" (1 Pet. 2:22). He added, "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous . . ." (1 Pet. 3:18). John, Jesus' "beloved" disciple, said, "He is righteous" (1 John 2:29) and "He is pure" (1 John 3:3). The apostle Paul asserted that "God made Him [Jesus] who had no sin to be sin for us . . ." (2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus' Flawless Character was Confirmed by His Enemies and Others.

Jesus challenged His enemies, saying, "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (John 8:46). His betrayer Judas confessed, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (Mat. 27:4). Governor Pilate who tried Jesus declared, "I am innocent of the blood of this just person" (Mat. 27:24). Pilate's wife told him, "Have nothing to do with that just man . . ." (Mat.. 27:19).

A Centurion who helped crucify Jesus exclaimed, "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). Again, a Centurion said, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Mat. 27:54). The thief on the cross was so impressed by Jesus that he requested, "Lord, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). Even the Herodians who opposed Jesus admitted, "Teacher, we know that you are true, and teach the way of God in truth: nor do you care about anyone, for you do not regard the person of men" (Mat. 22:16).

The Indirect Confirmation by Jesus' False Accusers.

Even the false witnesses are indirect testimony to Jesus' unblemished character. The Roman's charge was hardly a negative. They said He claimed to be "King of the Jews" (John 19:19)—which He was (Luke 23:3). The Pharisees said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons" (Mat. 12:24). But this was an indirect admission of His supernatural power in healing a demon possessed, mute, and blind man. The passers-by at the cross said, "Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days" (Mark 15:29). But this was indirect testimony to His claim to and proof of His deity since it referred to His death and resurrection (John 2:19-21). The Jewish High Priest and Sanhedrin charged Him, saying, "'you have heard the blasphemy! [that He claims to be the Christ, the Son of God]. What do you think?' And they all condemned Him to be worthy of death" (Mark 14:64). But He proved by His

miracles and resurrection to be the Son of God He claimed to be. This is hardly a flaw in His character. The crowd claimed, “We found this fellow subverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ the King” (Luke 23:2). But Jesus hardly subverted the nation when He told them “to render therefore unto Caesar the things that are Caesars” (Mat. 22:21). In addition He paid taxes (Mat. 17:27) and submitted peacefully to the capital authority of Rome to crucify Him unjustly. Likewise, healing people on the Sabbath was really a compliment, not a legitimate criticism of Jesus since it showed God’s love over man-made laws (Mk. 3:1-6).

Jesus Taught and Lived the Highest Ethic of the Sermon on the Mount (Mat. 5-7)

Jesus exemplified moral perfection by proclaiming and living by the Sermon on the Mount. Even the Hindu, Mahatma Gandhi, was deeply impressed with the life of Jesus and particularly with His Sermon on the Mount. In it and elsewhere, Jesus articulated many of the great moral principles known to mankind. He affirmed the Golden Rule (Mat. 7:12). He viewed this as a summary of the Ten Commandments which Jesus also affirmed, as He did the whole Old Testament (Mat. 5:17). He said, “Do not judge others” falsely or hypocritically (Mat.7:3-5). He taught us to “love your enemies” (Mat. 5:43-44). By contrast the Qur’an exhorts Muslims, “Take not Jews and Christians for friends. They are friends of one to another. He among you who takes them for friends is (one) of them” (Sura 5:51) and to “fight the minions of the devil" (Sura 4:76). Jesus said don’t retaliate: “But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Mat. 5:38-39). He condemned hypocrites, saying, “First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye” (Mat. 7:5). He took morality to its highest level when He condemned lust or hate in one’s heart (Mat. 5:22, 28). Jesus exhorted us, saying, “Blessed are the merciful” (Mat. 5:7). He commanded

us to keep our word, insisting, “Let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No’ be ‘No’” (Mat. 5:37). He reminded us to help the poor (Mat. 6:3-4), living a life of poverty Himself and having no home and owning only the clothes on His back (Mat. 8:20). Jesus said we should forgive others (Mat. 6:12), which He himself did while hanging on the cross (Luke 23:34). Jesus not only set the highest moral standard, He also met the highest moral standard. Of all the religious leaders the world has known, Jesus’ life is the most exemplar and flawless.

He lived a life of humility (Phil. 2:5-8; 1 Tim. 3:16). He suffered the innocent for the guilty (1 Pet. 3:18). As Isaiah predicted of Him, “As a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isa. 53:7).[145] One of Jesus’ inner circle was so impressed with Jesus’ innocent suffering that he wrote, “For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do good and suffer for it, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. For to this you are called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (1 Pet. 2:20-21). When Jesus was being falsely accused at His trials, He did not speak in His own defense (Mat. 27:12-14). Indeed, He died for His enemies (1 John 2:2). “But all that is in the world . . . is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16; Rom. 5:6-7). Jesus loved little children (Mark 10:14) and rebuked His followers by their example (Mat. 18:3). Jesus had compassion for others (Mat. 9:36), declaring “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . ! How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing: (Mat. 23:37). No one ever spoke like Jesus, and no one ever lived like Him.

Answering Christ’s Critics

Despite the unsurpassed and unprecedented record of His righteous deeds, some have searched for flaws in Jesus’ character, but their efforts have proved futile. The famous agnostic Bertrand Russell offered several arguments

against Christ.

The Charge That Jesus was Not "Profoundly Humane."[146]

In his well-known book, *Why I Am Not a Christian*, the agnostic Bertrand Russell argued that anyone who warns people of eternal punishment like Jesus did is not "profoundly humane"[147] (Mat. 5:22, 29, 10:28, 18:9). In response, Russell's charge begs the question of whether or not there is a hell. He assumes that there is not a hell and, hence, it is inhumane to threaten people with it. However, if there is a hell—and Jesus as the Son of God should know—then it would be profoundly inhumane *not* to warn people that they were headed there! After all, if there were a fire in a building and one did not warn the people of it, then they would certainly not be very humane. Even so, how much more should one warn about an eternal fire to which the unrepentant are headed.

The Charge that Jesus was Vindictive Toward the Jewish Leaders

It is also charged that Jesus reveals an anger and vindictive spirit. He declared, "Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. . . . Woe to you blind guides. . . . Fools and blind. . . . For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones" (Mat. 23:16-27). However, anger against sin is not a sin; it is an act of righteousness. After all, they were not only leading a path to their own self-destruction but also to that of others. Jesus said, "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in" (Mat. 23:13). So, this was not an act of vindictiveness but of tough love and compassion on those who were being deceived. Indeed, Jesus was so lacking in vindictiveness that He even forgave those who crucified Him, saying, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

The Charge That Jesus was Unkind

Bertrand Russell also argued that anyone who unnecessarily drowns pigs is unkind. Jesus did this very thing, and the swine perished in the sea (Mat. 8:32). This argument has particular appeal in an animal loving culture where people are sent to prison for cruelty to animals. However, we note first of all that Jesus did not drown the pigs. The demons did. Jesus cast the demons out of the men, and the demons drown the pigs. Second, the consequent action of the demons drowning the pigs was permitted by Christ but not produced by Him. And there is a significant difference between permitting a physical evil—which parents do every time they allow their teens to use the family car—and promoting an accident with it, which good parents would never do. Third, Jesus is Master of His creation. As such, He gives and can take life as He wills (Job 1:21; Deut. 32:29). Indeed, He has ordained that every animal will die, and sooner or later they do. Finally, Russell is more concerned about the pigs than the people whom Jesus delivered from the demons. On the contrary, Jesus was more concerned about the people than the pigs. Even most ardent animals lovers understand that a Pit Bull who has killed a little child should be eliminated so it cannot repeat the act. And it may have been, as *Ellicott's Commentary* (vol. 6) points out, that "only in some such way [as allowing the demons to destroy the pigs] could the man be delivered from the inextricable confusion between himself and the unclean spirits in which he had been involved. Not till he saw the demonic forces that had oppressed him transferred to the bodies of other creatures . . . could he believe in his own deliverance."[148] So, rather than demean Christ's character, this incident confirms what everywhere we learn in the Gospels, namely, His compassion for persons who are in bondage to evil forces.

In summation, the character of Christ has been well attested by both friend and foe.[149] Indeed, even Russell himself said elsewhere that "I grant him a very high degree of moral goodness."[150] He also said that what the

world needs is “love, Christian love, or compassion.”[151] But that is a great compliment to the character of Christ. Indeed, no one has expressed any greater love than Christ since He died for His enemies (Rom. 5:6-8; John 15:13).

The apologetic implications of a sinless life are obvious. No other human ever did it. It places Christ in a class of His own. Even the most holy mortals among us has serious faults, but His was a flawless life.

His Sinless Character Places Him in a Category of His Own

Of the great religious leaders, none besides Christ even claimed to be sinless. Muhammad prayed for forgiveness (Sura 47:19). Buddha was far from sinless, having deserted his family and never returned. Mahatma Gandhi engaged in religious wars against Blacks in South Africa.[152] Indeed, the great Christian saints were all painfully aware of their sinfulness. The apostle Paul cried out, “O wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24). Truly, “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23)—except one! Jesus Christ! This places Christ in a unique class of one. It is an apologetic of a perfect life. This in itself has value in drawing people to Christ.

As Horace Bushnell put it, “We can believe any miracle, therefore, more easily than that Christ was a man, and yet a perfect character, such as here is given.”[153] And he adds another angle when he asserted, “Being a miracle himself, it would be the greatest miracle of all miracles if he did not work miracles.”[154]

His Sinless Character Confirms His Claim to be God

Jesus Himself employed the connection between virtue and truth. When those opposed to Christ rejected His claim to deity and the miracles He had performed, Jesus said, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (John 8:46). When the Jewish leaders rejected even Jesus’ miracle of healing a man born blind,

some said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” (John 9:16).

The connection between virtue and truth is used in legal proceedings all the time. Witnesses are discredited if they are known to have lied. On the other hand, persons of integrity provide good witnesses. Jesus was unquestionably a person of integrity. Even unbelievers said of Him, “The people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them with authority, and not as the scribes” (Mat. 7:29). It is very difficult for one’s lips to have the ring of authority when His life cries out against what He says. Even Jesus’ enemies said, “Teacher, we know that You are true, and teach the way of God in truth; nor do You care about anyone, for You do not regard the person of men” (Mat. 22:16). With a testimony of virtue like this, it was hard to resist the conclusion that His claims to truth should be accepted.

The incomparable character of Christ was described well by Bushnell: “Now, one of two things must be true. He was either sinless, or he was not. If sinless, what greater, more palpable exception to the law of human development, than that a perfect and stainless being has for once lived in the flesh! If not, . . . then we have a man taking up a religion without repentance, a religion not human, but celestial, a style of piety never taught him in his childhood, and never conceived or attempted among men; more than this, a style of piety, withal, wholly unsuited to his real character as a sinner. . . . Could there be a wider deviation from all we know of mere human development?”[155]

Jesus was Confirmed to be God by a Supernatural Resurrection

Not only were Jesus’ claims to be God supernaturally confirmed by fulfilled prophecies, by His numerous and incomparable miracles, but also by His supernatural life. And in addition to all of that, the great miracle that confirmed Christ’s claims was His resurrection from the dead. Not only did Jesus repeatedly predict His resurrection (Mat. 12:40, 17:22–23, 20:18-19; John

2:19–22). Indeed, Jesus pointed to His resurrection as the unique "sign" He gave to His generation, saying, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks for a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Mat. 12:39-40).

Jesus Actually Died Physically

Of course, a prerequisite to a physical resurrection is a physical death. And the historically reliable Gospel records (see chapter 6) relate the overwhelming evidence that Jesus actually died on the cross contrary to the claim of many Muslims based on the Qur'an[156] (Sura 4:157) and even some critics' claims that Jesus only swooned (passed out) on the cross and was later revived in the cool tomb. The evidence against the apparent death theory is powerfully to the contrary. Consider the following:

1) Jesus' death was predicted many times in the Old Testament. All the resurrection passages (like Ps. 2:7, 16:10) implied that He had died. Zechariah says He was "pierced" in the side which implies death (see John 19:33-37). Daniel speaks of His being "cut off" (Dan. 9:27) by death after He has "made an end of sins" and "made reconciliation for iniquity" (Dan. 9:24). Isaiah 53 says He was "led as a lamb to the slaughter" (v. 7) and was "cut off from the land of the living" (v. 8) and "made His grave with the wicked—But with the rich at His death" (v. 9) and "He poured out His soul unto death" (v. 12).

2) Jesus predicted His death many times during His ministry (Mat. 12:40; Mark 8:31; John 2:19–21, 10:10–11). He said clearly, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised to life" (Mat. 17:22–23).

3) The nature of crucifixion assures His death since it is death by suffocation unless one is undergoing the excruciating pain of continually

pulling himself up for short breaths. When the crucifixion victims have not screamed in pain for several minutes, then they are dead. Jesus hung on the cross from nine in the morning until just before sunset (Mark 15:25, 33). He bled from gashes in His hands and feet and from the thorns that pierced His scalp. These wounds would have drained away considerable blood over more than six hours.

4) Jesus' side was pierced from which flowed a mixture of blood and water (John 19:34), a proof that physical death had occurred. This detail alone, and its confirmation by modern medical experts, strongly validates the claim that this narrative is an eyewitness account. An article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (March 21, 1986) concluded:

> Clearly, the weight of historical and medical evidence indicates that Jesus was dead before the wound to his side was inflicted and supports the traditional view that the spear, thrust between his right rib, probably perforated not only the right lung but also the pericardium and heart and thereby ensured his death. Accordingly, interpretations based on the assumption that Jesus did not die on the cross appear to be at odds with modern medical knowledge [p1463].

5) Jesus' dying words were heard from the cross, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit" (Luke 23:46). And when "He had said this, He breathed His last" (vs. 46). John said, "He gave up His spirit" (John 19:30). His death cry was heard by those who stood nearby and it evoked a response from them. Luke says, "When the centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God, and said, 'Surely this was a righteous man.' When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away" (Luke 23:47–49).

6) The Roman soldiers who were hardened executioners, accustomed to crucifixion and death, pronounced Jesus dead. So certain He was

dead, they did not break His legs to speed death (so that the person could no longer breathe), even though this was a common practice. They did not believe it necessary to break Jesus' legs (John 19:33).

7) Pilate double-checked to make sure Jesus was dead before he gave the corpse to Joseph to be buried. "Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph" (Mark 15:44–45).

8) Jesus burial assured His death. He was wrapped in about 100 pounds of cloth and spices and placed in a sealed tomb for three days (Mat. 27:60; John 19:39–40). If He was not dead by then, the lack of food, water, and medical treatment would have finished Him.

9) There were numerous witnesses, both friend and foe, at the cross (Luke 23:47–49). Almost everyone there had a vested interest in knowing that it was Jesus on the cross (not a substitute as Muslims claim) and that He was really dead. Consider the following: (a) The Roman soldiers there were charged with seeing to it that He had really died. (b) Jewish leaders were there who had sentenced Him to death for blasphemy. They too wanted to be sure that it was Jesus and that He was really dead. (c) Jesus' mother was there, and no mother would have been involved in either misidentification of her own son or a non-recognition of His death. (d) Likewise, the "women" who ministered to Jesus for years were there, as was (e) Jesus' disciple John who knew Him intimately (John 19:26). It is humanly impossible that all these people, all with a vested interest in who was dying and whether He died, could have been mistaken.

10) Jesus' later appearances would not have made the dramatic impact they did. There is no way anyone in Jesus' condition, later reviving in a cool tomb, could have left the victorious impression He did on His disbelieving and discouraged disciples. As even the noted David Strauss admitted, "It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulcher, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment . . . could have given His disciples the impression that He was a Conqueror over death and the grave. . . . Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which he had made upon them in life and in death . . . but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship."[157]

11) On top off all this, non-Christian historians of the times recorded that Jesus actually died. Julius Africanus (ca. A.D. 221) recorded that Jesus died, as did the first-century Samaritan-born historian, Thallus (ca. 52) who "when discussing the darkness which fell upon the land *during*

the crucifixion of Christ," spoke of it as an eclipse[158] The second-century Greek writer, Lucian, speaks of Christ as "*the man who was crucified in Palestine* because he introduced a new cult into the world." He calls Him the "*crucified sophist.*"[159] The "letter of Mara Bar-Serapion" (ca. A.D. 73), housed in the British Museum, speaks of Christ's death, asking, "What advantage did the Jews gain from *executing their wise King?*"[160] Finally, there was the Roman writer, Phlegon, who spoke of Christ's death and resurrection in his *Chronicles,* saying, "Jesus, while alive, was of no assistance to himself, but that *he arose after death, and exhibited the marks of his punishment, and showed how his hands had been pierced by nails.*"[161] Phlegon even mentioned "the eclipse in the time of Tiberius Caesar, in whose reign Jesus appears to have been crucified, and the great earthquakes which then took place."[162]

12) Likewise, the earliest Christian writers after the time of Christ affirmed His death on the cross by crucifixion. Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle John, repeatedly affirmed the death of Christ, speaking, for example, of "our Lord Jesus Christ, who for our sins suffered even unto death" (Polycarp, A.D. 33). Ignatius (A.D. 30–107), a friend of Polycarp, wrote, "And he really suffered and died, and rose again." Otherwise, he adds, all his apostles who suffered for this belief, died in vain. "But, (in truth) none of these sufferings were in vain; for *the Lord was really crucified* by the ungodly."[163] In *Dialogue with Trypho* the Jew, Justin Martyr noted that Jews of his day believed that "Jesus [was] a Galilean deceiver, whom we crucified."[164]

So, there is a virtually unanimous and unbroken testimony from the Old Testament to the early Church Fathers, including believers and unbelievers, Jew and Gentile, that Jesus suffered and died on the cross.

Jesus Rose Physically from the Dead Several Days Later

The evidence for the resurrection is as strong, if not stronger, than the evidence for His death. But this is the greatest miracle that Jesus performed. The evidence includes the following:

1. It is the only adequate explanation for the guarded empty tomb. Not only was Jesus' dead body never found, but His grave clothes were left there empty, including the head cloth folded up in a place by itself (a sign of deliberate activity). The tomb was guarded by Roman soldiers under the pain of death. So, there was no way the body could have been stolen. And even if it could have been moved under the guard of Roman soldiers, who took it? Where did it go? No one taking the body would have taken the time to fold the head cloth in a place by itself.

2. The positive proof for the resurrection is found in the numerous appearances of Christ in the same physical body—now alive—to hundreds of witnesses, including skeptics and unbelievers. This evidence includes the following:

a) There were a total of over 500 witnesses of the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:67). This number of witnesses places the event beyond all reasonable doubt.

b) There were some 12 different occasions on which Jesus appeared.

i. Mary Magdalene (John 20:10-18).

ii. The other women (Mat. 28:1-10).

iii. Two Disciples on road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35).

iv. Peter (John 20:3-9).

v. Ten Apostles (Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23).

vi. Eleven Apostles (John 20:24-31).

vii. Seven Apostles (John 21).

viii. All the apostles at the great Commission (Mat. 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-18).

ix. Five hundred brethren (1 Cor. 15:6).

x. James (1 Cor. 15:7).

xi. All the disciples at the Ascension (Acts 1:4-8).

xii. Appearance to Paul (1 Cor. 15:8; Acts 9:1-9).

Again, it is unreasonable to believe that over 500 people on twelve different occasions were all deceived about their encounter with the resurrected Christ. In addition, in A.D. 55—56[165] (only 22-23 years after the resurrection), Paul challenges the Corinthians to check with the living witnesses of the resurrected Christ, over half of them (251 plus) who were still alive and could verify his claim that Jesus rose from the dead.

c) The disciples to whom Jesus appeared were disposed not to believe. Hallucination is based on people who are predisposed to believe that it is true. Matthew records that "some doubted," even after they saw Him (Mat. 28:17). Mark says when the disciples were told by the women that Jesus had arisen, "they did not believe" (Mark 16:11). And Thomas said to the other disciples who had seen Christ, "Unless I see in His hand the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). These disciples were hardly likely candidates for deception.

d) The witnesses included Jesus' own unbelieving brother James. John says that "even His [Jesus'] brothers did not believe in Him" (John 7:5). Yet Paul says Jesus "appeared to James" after His resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7).

e) The witnesses included the Christian antagonist, Saul of Tarsus. No contemporary of Jesus opposed the resurrection more than the Jewish Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus. And yet he received an appearance of Christ on the road to Damascus and was converted. Paul later said, "Am I not an apostle? . . . Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 9:1 cf. Acts. 9:1-9). He is one of the most unlikely potential converts to Christianity–and yet he was. Only a real appearance of the real Christ can adequately explain his conversion to Christianity.

f) There were many evidences that the body that appeared was the same body of Jesus that died such as: (1) the grave clothes were left behind (John 20:5-6); (2) it had the crucifixion scars on it (Luke 24:39; John 20:27), (3) it could be and was touched (Mat. 28:9[166]; Luke 24:39; John 20:27), and (4) it could and did eat physical food. Luke affirms that "they gave Him a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence" (Luke 24:42-43). It could be and was seen and heard with the physical senses (eye, ears, and touch).

g) The evidence that this was a resurrection of His physical body is as strong as it could possibly be: (1) The physical body permanently vacated the tomb; (2) the empty grave clothes were left behind (John 20:5-6); (3) the disciples saw Jesus, heard Him, and touched Him with their natural senses after His resurrection; (4) they saw and touched the crucifixion scars, showing it was the same body in which He died (Luke 24:39; John 20:27); (5) they ate with Him on four different occasions (Luke 24:30, 24:42-43; John 21:10-13; Acts 1:4). Acts 10:41 says Jesus "ate and drank with them after He arose from the dead;" (6) His resurrection form was called a "body" (Gk. *soma*), a word that always means a physical body in the New Testament when referring to an individual human being;[167] (7) the resurrection body is referred to twice directly (Luke 24:39; Acts 2:31)

and twice indirectly (1 John 4:2; 2 John 7)[168] as a body of "flesh" (Gk. *sarx*), the strongest possible word for a physical body. The direct reference to the resurrection body as "flesh" are Luke 24:39 where Jesus said, "Handle me and see, for a spirit does not have *flesh* [*sarx*] and bones as you see I have" and Acts 2:31-32 where Peter said David predicted the resurrection when "he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His *flesh* [*sarx*][169] see suffer decay. This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses." In view of the overwhelmingly strong evidence that Jesus rose in the same physical body of flesh and bones in which He died, the attempts to twist other verses to deny this are in vain.

Answering Some Objections to the Physical Resurrection[170]

First Corinthians 15:44 speaks of the resurrection body as a "spiritual body," but it does not mean an immaterial body. It means the resurrection "body" (*soma*, which always means physical body when used of an individual human being) had a "spiritual" (*pnematikos*) source, namely it was sustained by God. The same word "spiritual" when used by Paul in this same book of 1 Corinthians always refers to something physical that had a divine source. For example, the physical manna Israel ate was called "spiritual food" (1 Cor. 10:3) because it came from God. Likewise, the physical rock from which came physical water was called a "spiritual rock" (1 Cor. 10:4). Likewise, a person living a life by the power of the Holy Spirit was called a "spiritual" man (1 Cor. 2:15; 3:1). In every case the object was physical, but the source was spiritual.

First Corinthians 15:50 declares that "flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of God," but it is not denying a physical resurrection. As the very next phrase indicates ("nor does corruption inherit incorruption"), he is speaking about corruptible flesh and blood not entering the kingdom. Indeed, Jesus clearly said that His resurrection body was "flesh and bones" (Luke 24:39). Of course, it

was incorruptible flesh and bones, but flesh and bones it was, nonetheless. The physical resurrection body is immortal but not immaterial. It is the same mortal body, now "put on" immortality (1 Cor. 15: 53). It is more than a physical body as we now know it, but not less than a physical body.

The fact that the resurrection body of Christ could miraculously appear and disappear no more proves it was immaterial than was the fact that Jesus could walk on water before His resurrection a proof that His pre-resurrection body was immaterial. Also Philip miraculously moved from one place to another in a pre-resurrection body (Acts. 8:39-40). One would expect that the miracle-working Jesus could do supernatural things after His resurrection as well as before it.

Summing Up the Whole Case to this Point

Since God exists (chapter 3), then miracles are possible (chapter 4). Since miracles are possible, then they can be used to confirm a message from God (chapter 5). Since the New Testament documents are historically reliable (chapter 6), revealing that Jesus claimed to be God (chapter 7), we have a convergence of three sets of unparalleled and unprecedented miracles that confirm the claim of Christ to be who He said He was (chapter 8). This brings us to a dramatic climax: *Jesus was the theistic God He claimed to be!* This is the subject of the next chapter (see chapter 9).

CHAPTER 9: JESUS WAS SUPERNATURALLY CONFIRMED TO BE GOD IN HUMAN FLESH

A Brief Review

WE HAVE ALREADY SEEN THAT TRUTH ABOUT REALITY IS KNOWABLE (chapter 1). Opposites cannot both be true (chapter 2). The theistic God exists (chapter 3). Miracles are possible (chapter 4). Miracles performed in connection with a truth claim confirm that claim to be true (chapter 5). The New Testament documents are historically reliable (chapter 6). As witnessed in the New Testament, Jesus not only claimed to be God (chapter 7), but His claim was confirmed by a unique convergence of miracles (chapter 8). Therefore, we can now conclude that Jesus was God in human flesh.

Criteria for Miraculous Confirmation

Several criteria were established (in chapter 5) for allowing miracles as a confirmation of a truth claim. These criteria are reasonable safeguards for making sure it was a miraculous confirmation of a message from God. Without meeting these criteria, the evidence for Jesus' deity is lessened significantly. With them, it places the evidence beyond reasonable doubt.

1. *They Must be Truly Supernatural Events.*

The events used must be truly supernatural. No anomalies, magic, providential acts, or psychosomatic cures qualify as true miracles (see chapter 4).

Most of Jesus' miracles were beyond reasonable doubt as to their authenticity. Even professional magicians have acknowledged that without elaborate technological aids and advanced staging (which Jesus did not have),

there is no way to fake His miracles.[171] For example, Lazarus was already dead four days and his body stinking before Jesus raised him up to life again (John 11:39). Jesus' walking on water was clearly miraculous. Given the waves, the storm, and Peter's sinking in the water (Mat. 14:22-33), Jesus was not near the shore or shallow water where He could have faked it. Likewise, healing a man born blind is supernatural. The evidence for its supernatural nature comes from the admission of the parents, the blind man, and even the authorities who could not refute it but tried to resist it (John 9). Similarly, turning water into wine is truly miraculous (John 2), as was feeding 5000 with a few loaves and fishes (John 6). Some miracles Jesus did from a distance without any contact crucial to purely psychosomatic cures (John 4). At times Jesus performed mass healings (Mat. 8:16). He also healed those incurably sick, like lepers (Mat. 8). Given the existence of God (chapter 3) and the accuracy of the Gospel record (chapter 6), there is no human way possible that these, unique, unusual, and multiple events in the name of the theistic God could be anything but supernatural.

2. *There Should be Multiple Miracles.*

There should be at least two or more miracles. This is based on the valid legal principle that "the mouth of two or three witnesses" (Deut.17:6) is necessary in important matters. And miracles are a witness–a supernatural witness. The Gospel record provides over fifty miracles that Jesus did. Some of them involving many people.

	Matthew	***Mark***	***Luke***	***John***			
				2:1-11	1	Turning water into wine.	
				4:46	2	Nobleman's son healed.	
			4:30		3	Jesus escapes from the hostile multitude.	
			5:6		4	Catching a draught of fish.	
		1:23	4:33		5	Casting out an unclean spirit	

	8:14	1:30	4:38		6	Healing Peter's mother-in-law	
	8:16	1:32	4:40		7	Healing many sick people.	
	8:2	1:40	5:12		8	Cleansing a leper.	
	9:2	2:3	5:18		9	Healing a paralytic.	
				5:9	10	Healing an infirmed man at Bethesda	
	12:9	3:1	6:6		11	Healing the man's withered hand	
	12:15	3:10			12	Healing many people.	
	8:5		7:1		13	Healing a centurion's servant.	
			7:11		14	Raising a widow's son	
	12:22				15	Casting out a demon from a blind mute	
	8:23	4:35	8:22		16	Calming the storm on the sea	
	8:28	5:1	8:26		17	Casting out the demons into herd of swine.	
	9:18-23	5:22-35	8:40-49		18	Raising the ruler's daughter	
	9:20	5:25	8:43		19	Healing the woman with an issue of blood.	
	9:27				20	Healing two blind men.	
	9:32				21	Casting out a demon from a deaf mute.	
	14:13	6:30	9:10	6:1	22	Feeding the 5,000.	
	14:25	6:48		6:19	23	Walking on the sea.	
	14:36	6:56			24	Healing many persons	
	15:21	7:24			25	Healing the Gentile man's daughter	
		7:31			26	Healing a deaf mute.	
	15:32	8:1			27	Feeding the 4,000.	
		8:22			28	Healing a blind paralytic at Bethsaida.	
	17:10-8	9:2-8	9:28-36		29	Jesus' transfiguration.	
	17:14	9:17	9:38		30	Healing the epileptic boy.	
	17:24				31	Temple tax in the fish's mouth.	
				9:1	32	Healing a man born blind.	
			11:14		33	Curing a demon-possessed, blind mute man.	
			13:11		34	Healing an infirmed woman.	
			14:5		35	Healing a man with dropsy.	
				11:43	36	Raising Lazarus.	
			17:11		37	Cleansing ten lepers.	
	20:30	10:46	18:35		38	Healing the two blind men.	
	21:18	11:12			39	Withering the fig tree.	
			22:51		40	Restoring a servant's ear.	
	28	16:1-8	24	20	41	The resurrection of Jesus.	
	28:1-7				42	An angel rolls the stone from the grave.	

	28:5-8	16:5-7	24:4-8		43	Angelic appearance to those at the sepulcher.	
				20:11-13	44	Two angels appear to Mary.	
		16:9		20:14-17	45	Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene.	
	28:9-10				46	Jesus appears to the women.	
		16:12	24:13-35		47	Jesus appears to the two on the road to Emmaus.	
				20:19-23	48	Jesus appears to ten apostles.	
		16:14-18	24:36-48	20:26-31	49	Jesus appears to eleven apostles	
				21:1-25	50	Jesus appears to 7 apostles	
				21:6	51	Miraculous catch of fish.	
	28:16-20	16:15-18			52	Jesus appears all the apostles	
				1 Cor. 15:6	53	Jesus appeared to 500 brethren	
				1 Cor. 15:7	54	Jesus appeared to James	
				Acts 1:3-5	55	Jesus appeared to all the apostles.	
				Acts 1:6-9	56	Jesus ascended into heaven.	

These numerous and diverse miracles place the confirmation of Christ's claims to be God beyond reasonable doubt. They put Christ's claims and confirmations in a class of their own, not paralleled by any other person known to history.

3. *The miracles should be in connection with some truth claim in the name of God.*

Unless the truth claim is made in the connection with the miracle, there is no way to know the miracle is the confirmation of a truth claim. Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, saw the connection when he said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him" (John 3:2). Jesus stated the connection between His claim to be the Messiah and His miracles when He said, "But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sin—He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed and walk'" (Mat. 9:6). Jesus also affirmed

the connection between His miracles and His claim to be the Messiah when the disciples of John the Baptist asked Him if He was the Messiah, “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: the blind receive their sight and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear . . .’” (Mat. 11:4-5). Jesus’ disciple Peter said of Him, “Jesus of Nazareth, [was] a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst” (Acts 2:22). The writer of Hebrews stated the connection between message and miracle well when he wrote, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first, began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His will” (Heb. 2:3-4). Indeed, even after His resurrection—the great sign that He was the Son of God (Mat. 12:39-40), John said of Jesus, “Truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ [Messiah], the Son of God . . .” (John 20:30-31). *So, Jesus’ miraculous ministry was directly connected with His claim to be God.*

4. *The Predictive Element Confirms its Supernatural Nature.*

Predictions made in connection with truth claims give further evidence of their supernatural nature. They eliminate charges that the miraculous event is not connected with the truth claim. Otherwise, it might be viewed as a fluke. For example, if a false teacher was teaching along the shores of the Sea of Galilee as Jesus walked by on the water, it should not have been taken as a confirmation of the false teacher’s views. Jesus’ signs were connected to Jesus’ sermons; His divine confirmation was connected with His divine revelation.

5. *The Miracles must be unique.*

In order for the miracles to be used as a supernatural confirmation of a

truth claim, they must be unparalleled in other religions with contrary truth claims. As David Hume correctly argued,[172] similar unusual events associated with conflicting truth claims are self-cancelling. Hence, if one religion is to be uniquely confirmed as the true religion, then other opposing religions cannot have the same kind of alleged miracles in connection with their truth claims.

The miracles of Christ recorded in the Gospels are unique. They were not only truly supernatural, multiple, and predictive, but were connected with His truth claims. And the reports of these events are contemporary, eye-witness based records. There are no other world religions with this unique convergence of evidence. Indeed, it will be remembered (from chapter 8) that there were three sets of miracles converging in Christ that set Him off as unique. He fulfilled numerous supernatural predictions made of Him hundreds of years in advance. He lived a sinless and supernatural life, performing over 50 recorded miracles (see above). And He predicted and accomplished His own resurrection from the dead. There are in fact no other religious leaders on record doing anything like this. Hence, in answer to Hume's challenge, we agree that competing religious truth claims all having similar confirmation would be self-cancelling. However, since in practice there are no other competing truth claims with comparable supernatural confirmation, the flip side of this is that Christianity—and Christianity alone—has its central truth claims (about the deity of Christ) supernaturally confirmed.

Why Alleged Supernatural Events of Other Religions Are Not Qualified

It is acknowledged that there are miracle claims in other religions. This is true of Judaism, Islam, and even non-theistic religions. So, these must be reviewed to see if any are comparable to the above Christian claim for supernatural confirmation of the claims of Christ to be God.

Miracle Claims in Judaism

Here we must distinguish biblical Judaism and post-biblical Judaism.

Biblical Judaism is the parent of biblical Christianity since Jesus claimed to be and was miraculously confirmed to be the Jewish Messiah-God (see chapters 7 and 8). Even Jesus said, “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22) and that He came “to fulfill the law and the prophets” (Luke 24:27). Indeed, Jesus fulfilled nearly a hundred Old Testament predictions about the Messiah (see chapter 8). And the New Testament has literally hundreds of quotations, citations, and references to the Old Testament, showing its roots in Judaism. Hence, there is no conflict between the claims of biblical Judaism and Christianity since Christianity is a fulfillment of the predictions of biblical Judaism about the Messiah.

Post-biblical Judaism, which rejects Jesus as their Messiah, is in direct conflict with Christian claims that Jesus is the Messiah predicted in the Old Testament. However, they have no miracles to support their claims that Jesus is not the Messiah. Further, there is no wisely acclaimed central figure in post-biblical (post first century) Judaism, like Moses, who claimed to be a prophet of God and offered miracles in support of this claim. There have been, of course, many Messianic pretenders (see Acts 5:36-37), but none provided miracles comparable to Jesus, nor did any gain wide acceptance in Judaism. Other than these, there is nothing unique in post-biblical Judaism to offer that even compares in its claim to the Christian claim.

Skeptics sometime offer the argument that Josephus records a miracle in the Jewish War (written A.D. 75-79) that allegedly happened only ten to fifteen years earlier (c. A.D. 66) in which it was as bright as noon at 3 A.M. and “a cow gave birth to a lamb.” Josephus added, “I would have dismissed it as an invention, had it not been vouched for by eyewitnesses, and followed by disasters that bore out the signs.”[173] However, unlike biblical miracles, (1) there is no confirmation of Josephus’ story from another reliable source; (2) there was no Messianic truth claim connected with it; and (3) unlike a virgin

birth of Jesus of a human from a human being,[174] this story is contrary to God's ordained way that each thing multiplies "after its kind" (Gen. 1:24).

In brief, it is contrary to nature and not, as true miracles are, simply events caused from someone beyond nature that, nevertheless, produces something that fits with nature.[175] For example, Jesus turned water into wine and multiplied loaves, but nature does this gradually all the time. Jesus simply speeded up the natural process. As Lewis notes of true miracles, "Not one of them is isolated or anomalous: Each carries the signature of the God whom we know through conscience and from Nature. Their authenticity is attested by their style."[176]

Other Non-Christian Religions

Many non-theistic religions, other than Islam (see below), have miracle claims,[177] but they are not comparable to Christianity. Neither Confucius (551—479? B.C.) nor Buddha (563-483 B.C.) made any claims to be prophets of God. Buddha remained agnostic. He claimed only enlightenment, and Confucius claimed only wisdom. Lao Tzu (604-531 B.C.) discouraged marvels.[178] None of these had theistic world views, and hence no truly supernatural events are possible in such non-theistic world views. Only if a supernatural Being exists, can He supernaturally intervene in the world (chapter 4). Hence, by their very nature there are no real miracles in these religions. Hence, there is no possibility of divine confirmation. Furthermore, since there is strong evidence for theism (see chapter 3), this automatically eliminates any non-theistic religions as candidates for being the true religion.

Nonetheless, many of these religions have healings and wonders associated with them, even though the alleged source would be a pantheistic or polytheistic god. However, as we will see, they are not comparable to the Christian claim in many ways.[179]

Miraculous Claims about Buddha

There are late claims of Buddha performing miracles, but they show the signs of legend for several reasons. First, they are late and not contemporary accounts. Second, Buddhism is a non-theistic religion, which by its very nature does not allow for supernatural acts since it denies a supernatural God. Third, they do not have a predictive element associated with them. Fourth, they are not connected with any truth claim to be a prophet of God. Finally, they are contrary to the very claims of Buddhism. As Lewis observes, "What could be more absurd than that he who came to teach us that Nature is an illusion from which we must escape should occupy himself with producing effects on the Natural level—that he who comes to wake us from the nightmare should *add* to the nightmare?"[180]

Miraculous Claims About Hare Krishna

Of the great religious leaders for whom miracles are claimed, none of them claimed to be any more than a prophet of God. None claimed to be God in human flesh. This is unique to Christianity. However, some forms of Hinduism, like Hare Krishna, claim that Krishna was an incarnation of God, but they lack several things unique to Christianity. (1) Krishna was not an incarnation of the true God—the theistic God. (2) There are no contemporary accounts of multiple miracles Krishna performed to support any such claim. (3) There were not specific and multiple long-range prophecies which he fulfilled. (4) Krishna did not live a sinless life. (5) Krishna did not predict and accomplish his physical resurrection from the dead, as Jesus did. So, there is really no comparison to the claims and confirmation of Christ. Hindu "miracle" claims cannot be true miracles, namely as supernatural act of a theistic God (see chapter 4) since they do not believe in such a God. Indeed, if a theistic God exists, as shown earlier (chapter 3), then these are automatically disqualified. For their central claim about God is false and, hence, they cannot be a true religion. They do not even have the truth about God, let alone the other things related to Him.

Miraculous Claims for Apollonius of Tyana (d. A.D. 98)

It is held by some that Apollonius claimed to be the Son of God and had the ability to do miracles to support his claim. Philostratus, in the *Life of Apollonius,* records post-death miracle stories, including appearances and deification (apotheosis). However, when the evidence is examined carefully, it does not support this claim.[181]

First of all, Philostratus's biography of Apollonius ends with his death. Jesus' biographies do not; they end with His resurrection (see Matthew 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; John 20–21).

Second, there is nothing supernatural in Apollonius's biography, either as to claims of deity or miracles done to prove such a claim. The post-death miracle stories are not part of his biography. They are simply called "stories" by his biographer, Philostratus. In fact, they are later legends.

Third, the book by Philostratus is the only extant source of his life. Hence, the authenticity of this account is unconfirmed. In Jesus' case we have multiple contemporary accounts of His life, death, and resurrection. Fourth, the alleged source for these stories, Damis, is most likely a nonexistent person used as a literary device. James Fergeson states, "Philostratus professed to have discovered an old document by one Damis as his source, but such discoveries are the stock-in-trade of historical romances, and we can place no credence upon Damis."[182] However, Damis is alleged to have come from Nineveh, a city that did not even exist during the time of his life. Throughout, there is no evidence for a factual basis of the stories. By contrast, the Gospel accounts of Jesus offer various historically verifiable evidences of their accuracy (see chapter 6).

Fifth, the style of writing used by Philostratus was a popular literary form of the day called "romance" or "romance fiction." It is not to be taken literally or historically. The plot unfolds through contrived situations; it involves exotic animals and formal descriptions of works of art; and it has lengthy speeches by the characters. As a report, the account contains many geographical and

historical inaccuracies. For example, Nineveh and Babylon were destroyed 300 years earlier. The Caucasus Mountains are described as a dividing point between India and Babylon, which is inaccurate. Philostratus's speeches are anachronistically put into Apollonius's mouth (from *Lives of the Sophists*).

Sixth, Philostratus was not an eyewitness but was commissioned to compose his book by Julia Domna, wife of the Roman emperor Septimus, 120 years after Apollonius's death. This is the time by which myths develop. By contrast, the Gospels and Paul's accepted epistles are multiple, eye-witness, and contemporary accounts written within a few decades of the events (which leaves insufficient time for such myths to develop).

Seventh, a possible motive for the publication of Philostratus' work was a desire to counteract the growing influence of Jesus. One historian says, "It was she (Julia Domna) who encouraged Philostratus to put together a life of Apollonius of Tyana as a counterblast to Jesus."[183] Another said that, since she was to become the high priestess of the Hellenistic polytheism, "Realizing the need of finding a historical figure fitted to counter the propaganda of the subversive gospels, she sought particularly to revive the memory of a hero of pagan hagiology, Apollonius of Tyana."

Eighth, the miracle stories about Apollonius are contradictory. Some say he died in Ephesus, others in Lindus or Crete, and then appeared later. Only one such appearance is recorded by Philostratus. This was to a man while he slept, a vision 200 years after Apollonius is said to have lived (A.D. 273). Others say he did not die but was deified because he disappeared.

Finally, there is an important difference between the claims that Apollonius was deified and that Jesus was Deity. Apollonius's deification is known as apotheosis, the process by which a human becomes God. Christ's incarnation was a process by which God became human (John 1:1, 14; 1 Tim. 3:16). Further, the concept of "God" differed. Christ was God in the theistic

sense. The claim for Apollonius would make him God only in a polytheistic sense.

In summation, there is no real comparison of Apollonius with the claims of Christ. First, there are no claims to be the theistic God. Second, there are no contemporary, multiple miracles to confirm the claims about Apollonius. Third, there is no multiple predictive prophecy associated with his claims. Finally, there is every indication of the legendary origin of the story that we do have.

The Miraculous Claims for Muhammad

The closest competitor to the claims of Christianity—certainly of any major religious figure—is that of Islam. It is claimed by Muslims that Muhammad was a prophet of God and that there are supernatural events to confirm this. Hence, it necessary to examine these claims. Nowhere in the Qur'an did Muhammad ever offer miraculous confirmation to be a prophet, even when challenged by unbelievers to do so (3:181–84). Nonetheless, miracle stories abound in later Muslim tradition. These miracle claims about Muhammad fall into three basic categories: those recorded in the Qur'an, those alleged supernatural predictions by Muhammad in the Qur'an, and those found in the *hadith* (Islamic tradition).

A General Claim for Miracles

Many Muslims use Sura 6:35 to show that Muhammad could do miracles. It reads, "If their spurning is hard on thy mind, yet if Thou wert able to seek a tunnel in the ground or a ladder to the skies and bring them a Sign—(What good?)." However, careful examination of the text reveals that it does not support the claim that Muhammad was able to perform miracles. First of all, it is hypothetical—"*If* Thou were able. . . . " It does not say he was able. Second, the passage even implies that he could not perform miracles. Otherwise, why was he being spurned for not doing so? If he could have done miracles, then he could

have easily stopped their spurning that was so “hard on thy [his] mind.” Further, Muhammad refused to do miracles of nature when asked to do so, offering only his so-called “revelations” as signs from God (see below).[184]

The Alleged Splitting of the Moon

Many Muslims claim Sura 54:1–2 means that upon Muhammad’s command, before unbelievers, the moon was split in half. It reads: “The Hour (of Judgment) Is nigh, and the moon Is cleft asunder. But if they see A Sign, they turn away, And say, ‘This is (But) transient magic.’” Here again there are several difficulties with this interpretation of the text. First, Muhammad is not mentioned in the passage. Second, the Qur’an does not actually call this a miracle (*mudjiza*) in the sense used here, using only the word sign (*ayah*). Third, if it were a miracle, it would contradict other passages that claim Muhammad did not perform feats of nature like this (3:181–84). Fourth, this passage is earlier than the other ones in which unbelievers are calling for a sign. Fifth, a sign like this would have been universally observed throughout the world, but there is no evidence that it was. Sixth, even other Muslim scholars say this is speaking about the resurrection of the last days, not a miracle during Muhammad’s day. They maintain that the phrase “the Hour (of judgment)” refers to the end times. The past tense they take as the usual Arabic way of expressing a future prophetic event.

The Alleged Supernatural Beauty of the Qur’an

Muslims often argue that the Qur’an was a miracle because the Qur’an has a unique literary beauty. However, this argument fails for many reasons. First, a beautiful writing is not a truly supernatural event. No natural law is suspended. Second, beauty is not a test for truth. Truth can be expressed in a less than elegant way, and error can be expressed beautifully. Third, just because Muhammad did not have a formal education does not mean that he could not utter beautiful expressions. Fourth, Muhammad did not actually write the

Qur'an. He only gave it orally, and it was later copied down and edited by Uthman, the third Muslim Caliph. Fourth, by this criterion, the works of Homer or Shakespeare could be considered inspired. Finally, there are many not so beautiful parts of the Qur'an (see C. G. Pfander, *Balance of Truth*). But no Muslim would claim they are not inspired of God (see Geisler, *Answering Islam*, chapter 9).

The Alleged Ascension of Muhammad into Heaven

This story is known as the *Isra* or "night journey." Many Muslims believe that Muhammad, after being transported to Jerusalem, ascended into heaven on the back of a mule. In Sura 17:1, we read: "Glory to (God) Who did take His Servant For a Journey by night From the Sacred Mosque To the Farthest Mosque, Whose precincts We did Bless—in order that We Might show him some Of Our Signs." Later Muslim traditions expanded on this verse, speaking of Muhammad being escorted by Gabriel through several levels of heaven, being greeted by important people (Adam, John, Jesus, Joseph, Enoch, Aaron, Moses, and Abraham), where he bargains God down in his command to pray fifty times to five times a day.

There is no reason to take this passage as referring to a literal trip to heaven; even many Muslim scholars do not take it so. The noted translator of the Qur'an, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, comments on this passage, noting that "it opens with the mystic Vision of the Ascension of the Holy Prophet; he is transported from the Sacred Mosque (of Mecca) to the Farthest Mosque (of Jerusalem) in a night and shown some of the Signs of God." Even according to one of the earliest Islamic traditions, Muhammad's wife, A'isha, reported that "the apostle's body remained where it was but God removed his spirit by night."[185] Further, even if this were to be understood as a miracle claim, there is no evidence presented to test its authenticity. Since it lacks testability it has no apologetic value.

Finally, by Islam's own definition of a confirming sign, this miracle would have no apologetic value. For according to Muslim scholars themselves, a miracle (*mudjiza*) confirming the authenticity of a prophet (1) is an act of God that cannot be done by any creature, (2) is contrary to the customary course of things in that class, (3) is aimed at proving the authenticity of that prophet, (4) is preceded by the announcement of a forthcoming miracle, (5) proceeds in the exact manner it was announced, (6) occurs only through the hands of the prophet, (7) in no way disavows Muhammad's prophetic claim, (8) is accompanied by a challenge to reduplicate it, and (9) cannot be followed by a duplication by anyone present. However, there is no evidence in the text that the "miracle of *Miraj*" even comes close to meeting all these criteria.

The Alleged Supernatural Victory at Badr

Another miracle claim often attributed to Muhammad is the victory at Badr (see 3:123; 8:17). In 5:12, we read, "O ye who believe! Call in remembrance The favour of God unto you when Certain men formed the design To stretch out Their hands against you, But (God) held back Their hands from you: So fear God." According to Islamic tradition, several miracles are said to have occurred here, the most prominent of which was God sending three thousand angels to help in the battle (supposedly identifiable by the turbans they wore) and the miraculous rescue of Muhammad just before a Meccan was going to kill him with a sword. One tradition tells how Muhammad threw a handful of dirt into the Meccan army to blind them and drive them into retreat.

In response to this alleged miracle several things should be observed. First, it is questionable whether all of these passages refer to the same event. Even many Muslim scholars believe Sura 8 is speaking of another event and is to be taken figuratively as God casting fear into the heart of Muhammad's enemy, Ubai ibn Khalaf. Sura 5 is taken by some to refer to another event, possibly to the attempted assassination of Muhammad at Usfan.

Second, only Sura 3 mentioned Badr, and it says nothing about it being a miracle. At best it would reveal God's providential care for Muhammad, not a supernatural event. Certainly it does not speak of a miracle that confirms Muhammad's prophetic credentials since there is no evidence that it fits the nine criteria for such a miracle.

Third, as many critics have pointed out, if Badr's victory is a sign of divine confirmation, then why was not the subsequent clear defeat at Uhud a sign of divine disapproval? So humiliating was the defeat that they "pulled out two links of chain from Muhammad's wound, and two of his front teeth fell off in the process." In addition, the Muslim dead were mutilated on the battlefield by the enemy. One enemy of Muhammad even "cut off a number of noses and ears [of his troops] in order to make a string and necklace of them." Yet he did not consider this a supernatural sign of divine disfavor.

Finally, Muhammad is not the first outnumbered military leader in history to win a big victory. The Israeli six-day war in 1967 was one of the quickest and most decisive battles in the annals of modern warfare. Yet no Muslim would consider it a miraculous sign of the divine approval of Israel over an Arab nation (Egypt).

The Alleged Splitting of Muhammad's Chest

According to Islamic tradition, at Muhammad's birth (or just before his ascension), Gabriel is said to have cut open Muhammad's chest. Gabriel removed and cleansed his heart, then filled it with wisdom, and placed it back in the prophet's chest. This is based in part on Sura 94:1–2, 8, which reads, "Have We not Expanded thee thy breast?—And removed from thee Thy burden . . . and to thy Lord Turn (all) thy attention." However, even most conservative Islamic scholars take this passage as a figure of speech describing the great anxiety Muhammad experienced in his early years at Mecca. The Qur'anic commentator

Yusuf Ali said, “The breast is symbolically the seat of knowledge and of the highest feeling of love and affection.”

Alleged Supernatural Predictions in the Qur’an

Some Muslims offer predictive prophecies in the Qur’an as a proof that Muhammad could perform miracles. But the evidence is not convincing. The suras most often cited are those in which Muhammad promised victory to his troops. Most of the so-called supernatural predictions are not supernatural at all. What religious military leader is there who might not say to his troops: “God is on our side; we are going to win. Fight on!” Further, remembering that Muhammad is known as “the prophet of the Sword,” with his greatest number of conversions coming after he had forsaken the peaceful but relatively unsuccessful means of spreading his message, it should be no surprise that he would predict victory. And considering the zeal of Muslim forces, who were promised Paradise for their efforts (Sura 22:58–59; 3:157–58; 3:170–71), it is no surprise that they were so often victorious. It is little wonder why so many “submitted,” considering Muhammad commanded that “the punishment of those Who wage war against God And his Apostle, and strive With might . . . Is: execution, or crucifixion, Or the cutting off of hands And feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land” (5:36).

The only really substantive prediction in the Qur’an was about the Roman victory over the Persian army at Issus (30:2–4), which reads, “The Roman Empire Has been defeated—In a land close by: But they, (even) after (This) defeat of theirs, Will soon be victorious—within a few years.” Close scrutiny, however, reveals several things that make this prediction less than spectacular, to say nothing of supernatural. (1) According to Ali “a few years” means three to nine years, but some argue that the real victory did not come until thirteen or fourteen years after the prophecy. The defeat of the Romans by the Persians in the capture of Jerusalem took place about A.D. 614 or 615. The

counteroffensive did not begin until A.D. 622, and the victory was not complete until A.D. 625. This would be at least ten or eleven years, not “a few” spoken by Muhammad. (2) Uthman’s edition of the Qur’an had no vowel points (they were not added until much later). Hence, in this “prophecy” the word *sayaghlibuna*, “they shall defeat,” could have been rendered, with the change of two vowels, *sayughlabuna*, “they shall be defeated.” (3) Even if this ambiguity were removed, the prophecy is less than spectacular since it is neither long-range nor unusual. One would have expected the defeated Romans to bounce back in victory. It took little more than a perceptive reading of the trends of the time to forecast such an event. At best, it could have been a good guess. In any event, there appears to be no sufficient ground for proving it is supernatural.

Finally, the only other alleged prophecy worth mentioning is found in Sura 89:2, where the phrase “By the Nights twice five” is taken by some to be a prediction of the ten years of persecution early Muslims experienced. But that this is a far-fetched interpretation is evident from the fact that even the great Islamic scholar and translator of the Qur’an, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, admitted that “by the Ten Nights are usually understood the first ten nights of *Zul-Hajj*, the sacred season of Pilgrimage.”[186] In any event, there is certainly no clear prediction of anything that would have been evident to an intelligent observer in advance of the event. It’s very use as a predictive prophecy by Muslim scholars shows how desperate they are to find something supernatural in support of the Qur’an.

The evidence that Muhammad possessed a truly supernatural gift of prophecy is lacking. The so-called prophecy is vague and subject to dispute. It is far easier to read this meaning back into it after the event than before it. If Muhammad possessed the ability to miraculously forecast the future, then surely he would have used it to squelch his opponents. But he never did. Instead, he admitted that he did not do miracles as the prophets before him had and simply offered his own sign (the Qur’an). Further, Muhammad never offered his alleged

prophecy as a proof of his prophethood. Jesus, by contrast, repeatedly offered His ability to do miracles as a proof that he was the Messiah, the Son of God (see above).

The So-Called "Miracles" in the Hadith

Most miracle claims for Muhammad are not based in the Qur'an. Indeed, in the Qur'an Muhammad repeatedly refused to perform miracles to confirm his prophetic credentials. Rather, he offered only the Qur'an as his sign. The vast majority of alleged miracles occur in the *hadith*, which are considered by Muslims to be second in authority only to the Qur'an. There are hundreds of such miracle stories in the *hadith*. A few will illustrate the point.

Al Bukhari tells the story of Muhammad's miraculous healing of the broken leg of a companion, Addullaha ibn Atig, who was injured while attempting to assassinate one of Muhammad's enemies. Several sources relate the story that Muhammad miraculously provided water for ten thousand of his troops at the battle of Hudaibiyah. He allegedly dipped his hand into an empty water bottle and let the water flow through his fingers. There are numerous stories of miraculous provision of water. There is also one of water being turned into milk. Several stories exist of trees speaking to Muhammad, saluting him, or moving from him as he passed. Once when Muhammad could not find a private place to relieve himself, two trees are said to have come together to hide him, and then returned when he was finished. Bukhari claims that once Muhammad leaned on a tree and the tree missed his company when he left. There are many stories of wolves and even mountains saluting Muhammad. Some stories speak of Muhammad miraculously feeding large groups with little food. Anas tells the story of his feeding eighty to ninety men with just a few loaves of barley. Ibn Sa'd relates the story of a woman who invited Muhammad to a meal. He took a thousand men with him and multiplied her small meal to feed them all. The *hadith* often relates stories of Muhammad's miraculous dealings with his

enemies. Once Muhammad cursed one of his enemies whose horse then sank up to its stomach in hard ground. Sa'd said Muhammad once turned a branch of a tree into a steel sword.

Many Reasons for Rejecting Miracles of the Hadith

There are many reasons for questioning the authenticity of these stories. First, the collections of the *hadith* that are generally accepted by most Muslims are far removed from the original events by several generations. Indeed, most of those who collected miracle stories lived one hundred to two hundred years after the time of the events—plenty of time for legends to develop. They relied on stories that had been passed on orally for many generations with ample embellishment. Even the stories accepted by Muslims as authentic, as determined by the *isnad* (chain of storytellers), lack credibility. For even these stories are not based on eye-witnesses but rely on many generations of storytellers, often involving hundreds of years. Islam scholar Joseph Horowitz, questioned the reliability of the *isnad*:

> The question as to who first circulated these miracle tales would be very easy to answer if we could still look upon the *isnad*, or chain of witnesses, as unquestionably as we are apparently expected to do. It is especially seductive when one and the same report appears in various essentially similar versions. In general the technique of the *isnad* does not make it possible for us to decide where it is a case of taking over oral account and where of coping from the lecture books of teachers.

Further, Bukhari, considered to be the most reliable collector, admitted that of the 300,000 *hadith* he collected, he considered only 100,000 might be true. He then narrowed this number down to 7,275, many of which are repetitions so that the total number is in fact near 3,000. That means that even he admitted there were errors in over 295,000 of them!

What is more, none of them are recorded in the Qur'an. In fact, they are in general contrary to the whole spirit of the Muhammad of the Qur'an, who

repeatedly refused to do these very kinds of things for unbelievers who challenged him (3:181–84; 4:153; 6:8–9).

In addition, these alleged miracles follow the same pattern as the apocryphal miracles of Christ from a century or two after His death. They are a legendary embellishment of people removed from the original events. They do not come from contemporary eyewitnesses of the events.

Also, even among Muslims there is no generally agreed upon list of miracles from the *hadith*. Indeed, the vast majority of stories from the *hadith* are rejected by most Muslim scholars as not being authentic. Different groups accept different collections of them.

Further, there is no one canon of authenticity for these stories accepted by all Muslims. Most Muslims rank their credibility in descending order as follows: the *Sahih* of Al Bukhari (d. 256) A.H. [‘After Hijrah,’—the flight of Muhammad in 622 A.D.]; *Al Sahih* of Muslim (d. 261 A.H.); the *Sunan* of Abu Du’ad (d. 275 A.H.); the *Jami* of Al-Tirmidhi (d. 279 A.H.); the *Suand* of Al Nasa (d. 303 A.H.); and the *Sunan* of Ibn Madja (d. 283 A.H.). Along with these *hadith* there were important biographers who related miracle stories. The most important ones are Ibn Sa’d (d. 123 A.H.), Ibn Ishaq (d. 151 A.H.), and Ibn Hisham (d. 218 A.H.). The above six categories are rejected by the Shia Islam. Yet they, along with other Muslims, accept the Qur’an as it is. Finally, what is of crucial significance here is that none of these miracle stories fit the nine criteria accepted by Muslims for a miracle that can confirm a prophet’s claim (*mudjiza*). Hence, by their own standard, none of them have any apologetic value in demonstrating the truth of Islam.

Finally, the origin of the miracle claims of Islam is suspect. It is common knowledge that Islam borrowed many of its beliefs and practices from other religions. This has also been documented by many scholars. It is not surprising

that Muslim miracle claims arise, then, as a result of Christian apologists demonstrating the superiority of Jesus to that of Muhammad by way of Jesus' miracles. It was only after two Christian bishops (Abu Qurra from Edessa and Arethas from Ceasaria) had pointed this out that the Islamic miracle stories began to appear. As Sahas noted, "The implication [of the bishop's challenge] is quite clear: Muhammad's teaching is one that might have merit; but this is not enough to qualify him as a prophet, without supernatural signs. If such signs could be shown one could possibly accept him as a prophet." Thus, to compete with the Christian claims they needed to invent miracles they could respond to the Christian challenge. It was soon after this that Muhammad's miracle claims began to appear. Sahas notes that "it is quite interesting that several of these (miracle stories) sound as if they are being offered as responses to such Christians as Abu Qurra, and they bear an amazing resemblance to miracles of Jesus found in the Gospels." Likewise, it was during this polemic that Muslims began to interpret certain events in the Qur'an as miracles. All of this points toward one conclusion: the Muhammad miracle stories lack credibility.

The So-Called Miracle of the Qur'an

Many Muslims claim that the Qur'an is Muhammad's miracle. They insist that an uneducated persons like Muhammad could not have produces a book with such literary excellence. However, this argument fails for many reasons. A literary masterpiece is not a miracle. No laws of nature are suspended to produce one. Second, Muhammad did not write the Qur'an. He had received his message orally. It was written down by others, and edited by the third Caliph, Uthman after Muhammad's death. Third, some critics have shown that it is not a literary masterpiece but contains numerous grammatical irregularities. Fourth, formally uneducated persons sometimes have great gifts of eloquence. Fifth, beauty is not a test for truth. Error can be beautifully expressed, and truth can be put in less elegant form. Sixth, literary beauty as a test for being the Word of

God would make Shakespeare and Homer's works divinely inspired as well. [187]

Conclusions About Muslim Miracle Claims

There are several reasons, these alleged miracles have no value in proving Muhammad was a prophet of God, let alone placing him on the level with Christ's claims to be the Son of God. First, most of the Muslim miracle stories do not come from the Qur'an (which alone they claim is inspired of God). Therefore, they lack divine authority for Muslims such as they claim the Qur'an has.

Second, the miracle stories based on Muslim tradition are suspect. They lack eyewitness accounts, contain many contradictions, and, therefore, lack credibility. The absence of these events in the Qur'an, where Muhammad is constantly challenged to support his claims miraculously, is a strong argument that they are not authentic. Surely, if Muhammad could have silenced his critics by proving his supernatural confirmation, he would have done so, since he was challenged to do so on many occasions.

Third, nowhere in the Qur'an does Muhammad ever offer the miraculous event in nature as evidence of his divine call. Contemporary Muslim author, Faruqi, claims that "Muslims do not claim any miracles for Muhammad. In their view, what proves Muhammad's prophethood is the sublime beauty and greatness of the revelation itself, the Holy Qur'an, not any inexplicable breaches of natural law which confound human reason." Even though some Muslim scholars dispute this claim, it is true, nonetheless, that Muhammad never performed miraculous feats in nature in support of his claim to be a prophet, even though other prophets did and he was challenged to do likewise (3:183; 4:153; 6:8–9; 17:90–95). Even the great Muslim scholar, Abdullah Yusuf Ali, admitted that Muhammad did not perform any miracle "in the sense of a reversing of Nature." This admission raises serious questions about his prophetic

credentials.

Fourth, even Muhammad accepts the fact that God confirmed the prophets before him by miracles. Interestingly, most of the prophets mentioned in the Qur'an are biblical characters. For example, in 6:84–86, after recounting the story of Abraham, God declares, "We gave him Isaac and Jacob: all (three) we guided: and before him we guided Noah, and among his progeny, David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, and Aaron: Thus do we reward those who do good: And Zakariya and John, and Jesus and Elias: All in the ranks of the Righteous: And Ismail and Elisha, and Jonas, and Lot." He refers to God confirming Moses' prophetic credentials by miracles several times (7:106–8; 116–19). He wrote, "Then We [God] sent Moses And his brother Aaron, with Our Signs and Authority manifest" (23:45). The Qur'an also refers to God's miraculous power being manifest through many other prophets (4:63–65). But if Muhammad recognized that God performed miracles through these biblical prophets, then why could he not perform them?

Fifth, Muhammad also accepts the fact that Jesus performed many miracles to prove the divine origin of his message, such as his healings and raising people from the dead. As the Qur'ansays, "O Jesus the son of Mary thou healest those Born blind, and lepers, by My leave [permission]. And behold! thou Bringest forth the dead By My leave" (5:113). But if Jesus could perform miraculous feats of nature to confirm his divine commission, and Muhammad refused to do the same, most Christians will find it difficult to believe Muhammad is superior to Christ as a prophet.

Sixth, when Muhammad was challenged to perform miracles to prove his claims he refused to do so. The Qur'an acknowledges that Muhammad's opponents said, "Why is not An angel sent down to him?" to settle the matter (6:8–9). According to Muhammad himself, unbelievers challenged him to prove he was a prophet, saying, "We shall not believe in thee, until thou Cause a spring

to gush Forth for us from the earth. . . . Or thou cause the sky To fall in pieces, as thou Sayest (will happen), against us; Or thou bring God And the angels before (us) Face to face" (17:90–92). Muhammad's response is illuminating: "Am I aught but a man,—An apostle?" One cannot imagine Moses, Elijah, or Jesus giving such a response. Indeed, Muhammad admitted that when Moses was challenged by Pharaoh he responded with miracles: "(Pharaoh) said: 'If indeed Thou hast come with a Sign, Show it forth,—If thou tellest the truth.' Then (Moses) threw his rod, And behold! it was A serpent, plain (for all to see)! And he drew out his hand, And behold! it was white To all beholders!" (7:106–8). The Qur'an goes on to say, "Thus truth was confirmed" (v. 118). Yet knowing this was God's way to confirm his spokespersons, Muhammad refused to produce similar miracles. Why then should anyone believe he stood in the line of the great prophets of God?

Finally, Muslims offer no good explanation for Muhammad's failure to do real miracles of nature such as Jesus did. One familiar Islamic argument is that "it is one of the established ways of God that He gives His Prophets that kind of miracles which accord with the genius of the time so that the world may see that it is beyond human power and that the power of God manifests itself in these miracles." Thus, "during the time of Moses the art of sorcery had made the greatest development. Therefore, Moses was given miracles which dumbfounded the sorcerers and at the sight of these miracles the sorcerers accepted the leadership and prophethood of Moses." Similarly, "during the time of the Prophet of Islam, the art of eloquent speech had made great advances. Therefore, the Prophet of Islam was given the miracle of the Qur'an whose eloquence stilled the voices of the greatest poets of his time."

However, there are several serious problems with this reasoning. For one things, there is no evidence that this is "one of the established ways of God." To the contrary, even by the Qur'an's own admission God repeatedly gave miracles

of nature through Moses and other prophets, including Jesus. It is God's established way to confirm His prophets through miracles.

Furthermore, it is a whole lot easier to produce a beautiful piece of religious literature than it is to perform miraculous feats of nature, which the Qur'an admits God did through other prophets. In fact, there are many other great pieces of religious literature that teach things contrary to the Qur'an, including the Jewish prophecy of Isaiah, the Christian Sermon on the Mount, and the Hindu Gita. Yet all these teach things contrary to the Qur'an.

In addition, Muhammad's unwillingness (and apparent inability) to perform miraculous feats of nature, when he knew that the prophets before him could and did perform them, will sound like a cop-out to thinking non-Muslims. They will ask, "If God confirmed other prophets by such things, then why did he not do the same for Muhammad and remove all doubt?" In Muhammad's own words (from the Qur'an), "They (will) say: 'Why is not A Sign sent down To him from his Lord?'" since even Muhammad admitted that "God hath certainly Power to send down a Sign" (6:37).

Also, Muhammad gave no such answer to his critics that it was God's established way to confirm his prophets in different ways in different ages according to the genius of the times. Rather, he simply offered his own sign (the Qur'an) and said their reason for rejecting him was unbelief, not his inability to do miracles. He wrote, "Say [to] those without knowledge: 'Why speaketh not God Unto us? Or why cometh not Unto us a Sign?'" Muhammad's answer was clear: "So said the people before them Words of similar import. Their hearts are alike" (2:118; cf. 17:90–93; 3:183). But as shown above, the alleged literary elegance of the Qur'an is not miraculous.

Finally, even when there are allegedly supernatural events connected to Muhammad's life (though not miracles of nature such as he acknowledges

Moses and Jesus did), they can be explained by natural means. For example, Muslims take Muhammad's outstanding victory at the battle of Badr in A.D. 624 as a supernatural indication of divine approval on his behalf. But exactly one year after, Badr Muhammad's supporters suffered a humiliating defeat.[188] Yet he did not consider this a supernatural sign of divine disfavor.

One Final Thought about Miracles and Non-Christian Religions

Nothing said thus far should be taken to imply that the God of all mankind who loves all people in all religious could not or would not do an occasional miracle among them, should he deem it part of His "goodness that leads to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). C. S. Lewis argued, "I am in no way committed to the assertion that God has never worked miracles through and for Pagans or never permitted created supernatural beings to do so. . . . but I claim that the Christian miracles have a much greater intrinsic probability in virtue of their organic connection with one another and with the whole structure of the religion they exhibit."

Further, such miracles would have no apologetic value in establishing the truth of the religion in which that person may be a part. They would be isolated acts of God, disconnected from the truth claim of the non-Christian religion and unsupported by multiple and predictive events, such as exist in Christianity.

Hear the Sum of the Whole Matter

Of all the world's great religion, Christianity alone meets the criteria necessary to establish miraculous confirmation of its truth claims. First of all, Christ is the only great world religious leader for whom we have reliable, contemporary documents of His life and teachings. Second, He is the only one of them who claimed to be God. Third, then Christ alone met all the criteria for using a miracle to confirm His truth claims. These criteria include that the events be truly supernatural, multiple, predictive, and connected with a truth claim. Other than Old Testament Judaism, which pointed forward to Christ, only

Christ's miracles meet all these criteria. And only Christ claimed to be more than a prophet. So, only Christ of all the great world religious leaders claimed to be God (see chapter 7). And only He proved to be God (see chapter 7) by a convergence of three sets of supernatural events to confirm his claims. Thus, contrary to Hume and the skeptics, there is no real equivalence in any competing truth claim to that of Christ. Hence, Christ—and Christ alone—was confirmed to be God almighty in human flesh! In short, the central claim of Christianity is true, and the opposing claims are false.

CHAPTER 10: WHATEVER JESUS AFFIRMED IS TRUE, IS TRUE

THIS CHAPTER IS SHORTER because once the terms are understood, the conclusion follows logically. For once we know what is meant by "God," which has already been discussed (in chapter 3), then it is understood why whatever He affirms as true, is true. And since Jesus has been shown to be God (chapter 7 and 8), then it follows that whatever He taught as true, is true.

A Review the Evidence

We have already established that truth is what corresponds to reality (chapter 1), and the opposite of true is false (chapter 2). Further, we have seen that a theistic God exists (chapter 3).

But a theistic God is an infinitely knowing[189] (because of the cosmological argument) and infinitely perfect Being (because of the moral argument). But such a Being cannot utter falsehood, either intentionally or unintentionally. God cannot err unintentionally because He is all-knowing (omniscient). And He cannot err intentionally because He is morally perfect, and an intentional falsehood would be a lie, which is contrary to His moral perfection. Hence, God cannot err in any way.

But Jesus is God since He claimed to be (chapter 7) and was confirmed to be (chapter 8) by a convergence of miracles that are possible (chapter 4) and that can be used to confirm a truth claim (chapter 8). It follows, therefore, that Jesus (who is God) cannot err. He cannot utter what is false. So, whatever He teaches as true, is true. And whatever He affirms as false, is false.

What About Jesus' Human Limitations?

It is objected by some that Jesus is also human, and humans can err.[190] Indeed, Jesus admitted that He did not know everything. The Bible says that Jesus "grew in wisdom" (Luke 2:52). Second, it declares that He did not know the time of His second coming. Mark recorded Jesus as saying, "But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32). So, if Jesus does not know everything as a human being, then it would be possible for Him to make unintentional errors, even granting He is morally perfect and would not make intentional ones. So, how can we trust that everything He affirms as true, really is true? Or, maybe He made some unintentional errors. In response, two things are necessary to point out.

Humans Do Not Always Err

First, just because humans can err does not mean that they always do err. "To err is human," but it does not mean that humans *always* err. Sometimes they do not. Sometimes, phone books are published with no errors in them. So, just because Jesus was human does not mean that He erred. The Bible also says Jesus was human but did not sin (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 1:19).[191] Just because He could have sinned, does not mean He did sin. And just because He could have erred does not mean He did err.

Jesus is Also God Who Can't Err

Second, we must keep in mind that Jesus is also God (chapter 8). And as God He cannot error. "It is impossible for God to lie" (Heb. 6:18). Paul speaks of "the God who cannot lie" (Titus 1:2). God is the source and standard of all truth, and as such He cannot be in error about anything. He is omniscient (all-knowing), and an all-knowing Mind cannot be in error about anything. So, the fact that Jesus is also human, in addition to being divine, does not take away from the fact that the one and the same person who is Jesus of Nazareth did not

err in anything. As God, He could not error, and as man, He did not err.

How, then, do we explain that Jesus did not make unintentional errors as a human being, especially in view of the fact that He admittedly did not know everything as a human being? The answer is twofold.

First, Jesus never taught in areas of His ignorance as a human being. He did not know the time of His second coming. So, He never taught anything in that area. Hence, He made no errors. For what He did not know, that He did not teach. One cannot make any mistakes in an area on which He makes no truth claims. In short, if you do not open your mouth on a topic about which you do not know anything, then you cannot be wrong on that topic.

Second, when Jesus did affirm anything He did so with divine authority. There were not two persons who were Jesus.[192] There was only one person. It was that one and the same human person, Jesus, who was confirmed to be God (chapter 8) who made the claims to be God (chapter 7). So, when that one and the same person affirmed anything, either as God or as man,[193] it must have been true. For one and the same affirmation cannot be both true and false at the same time and in the same sense. This would be a violation of the Law of Non-contradiction. But this Law is undeniably true (see chapter 2). Therefore, whatever Jesus affirmed as true (even if He was affirming it as a human being), was true.

Indeed, this is precisely what the Bible says about the teachings of Jesus, namely, that they were absolutely true and spoken with divine authority. Consider the following things Jesus said on this topic:

> *Matthew 11:27***:** "All things have been delivered to me by my Father."

> *Matthew 24:35*: "Heaven and earth will pass away but My word will not pass away."

*Matthew 28:18***:** "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me."

Matthew 28:20: "Observe all things I have commanded you."

*John 8:26***:** "He who sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him."

John 12:48: "The words that I have spoken to you will judge you in the last day."

It is evident from these texts that whatever Jesus did teach, He taught with divine authority. That is, He spoke only what the Father told Him to speak, and that Jesus' words, just like God's (Mat. 5:17-18), will never pass away (Mat. 24:35).

So, even what Jesus taught as a human being, was absolutely true. He not only was "the truth" (John 14:6), but everything He spoke was the truth. He never uttered any errors. As the Son of God He could not. And as the son of Mary He did not. He was both divine and human, but never erred as either.

What About Divine Accommodation?

God is infinite, and man is finite. So, in order for God to communicate with human beings He must make some accommodations. Just as Jesus who was God had to accommodate Himself to a human level in order to be a human being (Phil. 2:5-8), even so, if God is going to speak with human beings on our level, it is necessary to make some accommodations. Given this fact, is it not possible that Jesus (who was God), in order to accommodate His teachings to our level, would have to accommodate Himself to human error to one degree or another in order to communicate with us? Hence, what may appear to be an affirmation of truth by Jesus could in reality be an accommodation to human error?

It Confuses Adaptation and Accommodation

In response to the "Accommodation Theory," there are several important things to remember. First of all, it is true that God is infinite and we are finite. Thus, God *adapts* Himself to our finitude. However, because God is absolute truth, He cannot accommodate Himself to human error. He adapts Himself by use of partial truths but never accommodates to actual errors. There is a condescension of God in speaking truth to humans, but there is no compromise of the truth. In order for God to adapt to our finite minds, anthropomorphisms [194] are sometimes employed, but myths are never necessary. Indeed, Peter said, "We did not follow cunningly devised fables (Gk: *mythos*)" (2 Pet. 1:16).

For example, parents can accommodate to little children without telling falsehoods. When they first ask, "Where do babies come from?" we can truthfully (but only partially) answer: "From their mother's tummy." A little later when they ask, "How do the babies get there?" we can answer, "Daddy places a seed there." This is a condescension in terms they can understand (which is an adaptation). But we should not tell them that "storks bring the babies to us" (which is a myth). But the partial and progressive truth given by parents is an adaptation to their level of understanding at the time. Even so, God can adapt to our finitude by partial and progressive truth, but He can never accommodate to error in so doing.

Accommodation is Contrary to Fact

What is more, accommodation to error is contrary to fact. Everything that is known about Jesus' life and teaching reveals that He never accommodated to the false teaching of the day. On the contrary, Jesus rebuked those who accepted Jewish teaching. Consider the follow:

> *Mat. 15:3, 6:* Jesus declared "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? . . . Thus you nullify the word of God

for the sake of your tradition."

*Mat. 5:21–22***:** Jesus corrected false views about the Bible, affirming emphatically, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." This or the similar formula of "It has been said. . . . But I say unto you . . ." is repeated in following verses (cf. Matt. 5:23–43).

John 3:10: Jesus rebuked the famous Jewish teacher Nicodemus: "You are Israel's teacher of Israel and do you not understand these things?" He added, "I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

Mat. 22:29: Speaking specifically about their erroneous view of Scripture Jesus told the Sadducees bluntly, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God."

Mat. 23:16–33: Jesus' denunciations of the Pharisees were scarcely accommodating. "Woe to you, blind guides! . . . Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! . . . You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! . . . You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

John 2:15–16: Jesus was far from accommodating to the false beliefs and practices in the temple when "He made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; He scattered the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves He said, 'Get these out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!'"

Mat. 22:16: Even Jesus' enemies recognized that He would not compromise. They said: "Teacher, we know you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are." Nothing in the Gospel record indicates that Jesus accommodated to accepted error on any topic.

Accommodation to error was contrary to Jesus' character. His closest friends found Him impeccable (1 John 3:3; 4:17; 1 Pet.1:19). The crowds were

amazed at His teaching “because He taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Mat. 7:29). Even His enemies, like Pilate, examined Jesus and declared, “I find no basis for a charge against this man” Luke 23:4). The Roman soldier crucifying Jesus exclaimed, “Surely, this was a righteous man” Luke 23:47). Jesus was the Son of God and as such could not deceive. For God “does not lie” (Titus 1:2). Indeed, “It is impossible for God to lie (Heb. 6:18). His “word is truth” (John 17:17). “Let God be true and every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). Whatever divine self-limitation is necessary in order to communicate with human beings, there is no error, for God cannot err. It is contrary to His very nature. Like many other theories, the accommodation theory is a beautiful theory ruined by a brutal gang of facts. Jesus was “the truth” of God and as such He spoke nothing but the truth.

What’s Next?

If Jesus is God (chapter 8), and whatever Jesus (who is God) affirmed is true, is actually true, then whatever Jesus taught, whether as God or as man, must be absolutely true. This being the case, we can now ask what Jesus taught about the Bible. For up to this point we have only used the New Testament as a historically reliable source (based on good evidence) of what Jesus said and did. And as such, it informs us that He was confirmed to be God in human flesh. Now that we know who He is and that His words do not err, we can ask what He taught about the Bible. Was it, according to Jesus, more than a historically reliable book? Was it the very Word of God? We learn the answer to this in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 11: JESUS AFFIRMED THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD

Looking Back

WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY. We began with the undeniable affirmation that there is a real world and that we can know truth about it (chapter 1). We then discovered that the opposite of truth is false (chapter 2) and, therefore that opposing views cannot both be true. Then we found that the evidence shows that it is true that a theistic God exists, that is, an infinite personal and morally perfect Being who created the universe (chapter 3). From this we drew the inevitable conclusion that, if a supernatural Being existed who supernaturally made the world, then supernatural events are not only possible, but the biggest one has already occurred (chapter 4). When we examined the nature of a miracle, we discovered that when used in connection with a truth claim it can be used to confirm a message from Him to us (chapter 5). Given that, we looked at the evidence for the New Testament and concluded that it is the most historically reliable document from the ancient world (chapter 6). This being the case, we examined the New Testament to discover that its central figure, Jesus of Nazareth, claimed to be the theistic God in human flesh (chapter 7). Not only so, but His claim to deity was confirmed by a convergence of three sets of unparalleled and unprecedented miracles (chapter 8). This being the case, we concluded that Jesus of Nazareth was the only one known to history who claimed to be and proved to be God in human flesh! (chapter 9). Then, by examining the nature of the theistic God, we concluded that Jesus (who is God) could only affirm truth and that whatever He taught as true, is true. And, likewise, whatever, He affirmed as false, is false (see chapter 2). It remains now to examine what Jesus taught about the Bible.

JESUS CONFIRMED THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE WORD OF GOD

Jesus and His disciples used the phrase "it is written" of the Old Testament some ninety times. It is usually in the perfect tense, meaning, "it was written in the past and it still stands as the written Word of God." Often Jesus used it in the sense of "this is the last word on the topic; the discussion is over." Such is the case when Jesus resisted the temptation of the Devil. But He answered and said, "'*It is written*, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. . . .' Jesus said unto him, '*It is written* again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.' Jesus said to him, 'It is again written, Thou shalt not tempt [the] Lord thy God. . . .' Then saith Jesus unto him, 'Get thee hence, Satan: for *it is written*, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve'" (Mat. 4:4, 7, 10, emphasis added). This demonstrates that Jesus believed the Bible to have final and divine authority.

1. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament Scriptures were imperishable.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. Think not that I am come to make void the law or the prophets. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled" (Mat. 5:17–18). Jesus believed the Old Testament was the imperishable Word of the eternal God. He agreed with the prophet who said, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isa. 40:8).

2. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament Scriptures were inspired of God.

Although Jesus never used the word *inspiration*, He did use its equivalent. To the Pharisees' question, He retorted: "How is it then that David, *speaking by the Spirit*, calls Him 'Lord'?" (Mat. 22:43, emphasis added). Indeed, David himself said of his own words, "*The Spirit of the LORD spoke through me*; His word was on my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:2). This is precisely what is meant by

inspiration. The prophet Zechariah said of the Old Testament to his time as the writings of "the law and *the words which the Lord of host has sent by His Spirit* through the former prophets" (Zech. 7:12).

3. Jesus affirmed the Scriptures are unbreakable.

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

4. Jesus affirmed the Old Testament is the very Word of God.

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

5. Jesus ascribed ultimate supremacy to the Old Testament.

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

6. Jesus affirmed the inerrancy of the Scriptures.

Inerrancy means without error. This concept is found in Jesus' answer to the Sadducees, a sect who denied the divine inspiration of the Old Testament: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures [which do not err], nor the power of God"

(Mat. 22:29). In His high priestly prayer, Jesus affirmed the total truthfulness of Scripture, saying to the Father, “Sanctify them through thy truth: *thy word is truth”* (John 17:17, emphasis added). It is noteworthy that He said God’s word *is* truth, not merely *has* truth. For in truth itself there is no error.

7. Jesus affirmed the historical reliability of the Old Testament.

Jesus affirmed as historically true some of the most disputed passages of the Old Testament, including the creation of Adam and Eve (Mat. 19:4–5), the miracle about Jonah in the great fish, and destruction of the world by a flood in the days of Noah. Of the latter, Jesus declared, “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark” (Mat. 24:37–38). Jesus affirmed that Jonah was really swallowed by a great fish for three days and three nights: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Mat. 12:40). Jesus also spoke of the slaying of Abel (1 John 3:12), Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Mat. 8:11), the miracles of Elijah (Jas. 5:17), and many other Old Testament persons and events as historically true, including Moses, Isaiah, David, and Solomon (Mat. 12:42), and Daniel the prophet (Mat. 24:15). He affirmed the historical reliability of major disputed passages of the Old Testament. Both the manner in which these events are cited, the authority they are given, and the basis they form for major teachings Jesus gave about His life, death, and resurrection reveals that He understood these events as historical.

8. Jesus affirmed the scientific accuracy of the Old Testament.

The most scientifically disputed chapters of the Bible are the first few chapters. Yet Jesus affirmed this account in Genesis to be scientifically accurate in its central claim, namely the creation of the world and of Adam and Eve. He

unflinchingly bases His moral teaching about marriage on the literal truth of the creation of Adam and Eve. He said to the Pharisees, “Haven’t you read,” He replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?’” (Mat. 19:4–5). Further, He spoke of “the beginning of the creation” (Mark 10:6) and the “beginning of creation which God created” (Mark 13:19).[195]

After speaking to Nicodemus, the ruler of the Jews, about physical earthly things like birth and wind, Jesus declared: “I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?” (John 3:12). In short, Jesus said that, unless one could believe Him when He spoke of empirical scientific matters, then they should not believe Him when He speaks of heavenly matters—revealing that He considered them inseparable.

JESUS PROMISED THE NEW TESTAMENT WOULD BE THE WORD OF GOD

Not only did Jesus affirm the Old Testament, but He promised the New Testament. And Jesus' apostles and New Testament prophets claimed for their writings what Jesus had promised them.

1. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would teach His disciples "all truth."

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

Given the spiritual context and the fact that Jesus never taught all the truth of all the human disciplines, the "all truth" to which Jesus refers must be all truth that relates to doctrine and practice. As Paul said, all Scripture is inspired of God and "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). In short, Jesus taught all truth necessary for faith and practice.

2. The apostles claimed this divine authority Jesus gave them.

Not only did Jesus promise His disciples divine authority in what they wrote, but the apostles claimed this authority for their writings. John said, "These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name" (John 20:31). He added, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). Again, He said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false

prophets are gone out into the world. . . . They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God: he that knows God hears us; he that is not of God hears not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:1, 5–6).

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

3. The New Testament is the only authentic record of apostolic teaching.

But the New Testament is the only authentic record of apostolic teachings that we have.[196] Each book was written by an apostle or New Testament prophet (Eph. 2:20; 3:3–5). There are no other books in existence that came from the first century apostles or associates. All of them are contained in the twenty-seven books of the New Testament.

There were, of course, apocryphal (doubtful) and pseudepigraphal (false writings) books from the second and third centuries (such as *The Gospel of Thomas* and *The Gospel of Judas*), which are rejected by all sections of Christendom.[197] But in both their late date (long after the apostles were dead) and in their false doctrine (contrary to what the apostles taught in the New Testament), it is clear that they are not authentic apostolic writings. Early Church Father Irenaeus (who knew Polycarp, the disciple of John the apostle) said, "Indeed, they have arrived at such a pitch of audacity, as to entitle their comparatively recent writing, 'the Gospel of Truth,' though it agrees in nothing with the Gospels of the Apostles, so that they have really no Gospel, which is not full of blasphemy. . . . But that these Gospels [of the Apostles] alone are true

and reliable, and admit neither an increase nor diminution of the aforesaid number [four], I have proved by so many and such arguments."[198]

The great early church historian Eusebius (in his *Ecclesiastical History*) declared these apocryphal books to be "totally impious and absurd." And J. Donaldson , editor of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* wrote, "The predominant impression which they leave on our minds is a profound sense of the immeasurable superiority, the unapproachable simplicity and majesty, of the Canonical Writings."[199] Contemporary authority on the period, Edwin Yamauchi, concluded of the apocryphal books that "the apocryphal gospels, even the earliest and soberest among them, can hardly compare with the canonical gospels. The former are all patently secondary and legendary or obviously slanted. . . . The extra-canonical literature, taken as a whole, manifests a surprising poverty. The bulk of it is legendary, and bears the clear mark of forgery."[200]

4. Therefore, the "all truth" Jesus promised is in the New Testament.

From the fact that Jesus promised to lead His disciples into "all truth" and they both claimed this promise and recorded this teaching in the New Testament, which is the sole authentic written record of apostolic teaching, we may conclude that Jesus' promise was finally fulfilled in the inspired New Testament. So, Jesus directly confirmed the inspiration and divine authority of the Old Testament, and He promised and indirectly claimed the same for the New Testament. Therefore, if Christ is the Son of God, then both the Old Testament and the New Testament are the written Word of God. This fact was confirmed by the New Testament writers who considered other New Testament writings of both Gospels (see 1 Tim. 5:18) and Epistles (see 2 Pet. 3:15-16) as "scripture" right alongside the Old Testament.

CHRIST AND THE CRITICS

Jesus affirmed many of the very things that many modern critics deny about the Old Testament. If Jesus was right, then the critics are wrong, despite the pretense of having scholarship on their side. For if Jesus is the Son of God, then it is a matter of Lordship, not a matter of scholarship.

For example, negative critics of the Bible claim that Daniel was not a prophet, but only a historian recording the events after they happened (c. 165 B.C.). Jesus, however, declared Daniel was a prophet. Indeed, Jesus cited a prediction that Daniel made that had not yet occurred in Jesus' day: "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through *the prophet Daniel* . . . (Mat. 24:15, emphasis added). "See, I have told you ahead of time" (Mat. 24:25).

Also, many critics assert that the first human beings evolved by natural processes. But, as already noted, Jesus insisted that Adam and Eve were created by God (Mat. 19:4–5). If Jesus is the Son of God, then the choice is between Darwin and the Divine; between a nineteenth-century creature and the eternal Creator.

Most negative critics of the Bible believe that the Jonah story is a myth. But with strong emphasis Jesus asserted that "just as" Jonah was in the great fish three days and nights, "even so" He would be in the grave for three days and nights. Surely, Jesus was not comparing the historicity of His death and resurrection with mythology about Jonah. So, according to Jesus, Jonah is not a false whale of a tale; it is a true tale of a whale.

Bible critics often deny there was a world-wide flood in the days of Noah. But, as was seen above, Jesus affirmed there was a flood in the days of Noah in which all but Noah's family perished (Mat. 24:38–39; cf. 1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 3:5–6). Again, if Christ is right, then the critics are wrong. And how can Christ be wrong, if He is the Son of God (see chapter 8)?

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

Some Concluding Comments

Those who reject the Bible do well to ask: Who knew more about the Scriptures, Christ or the critics? The simple logic is this: if Jesus is the Son of God, as He proved to be (chapters 7-8), then the Bible is the Word of God. Conversely, if the Bible is not the Word of God, then Jesus is not the Son of God (since He would be teaching false doctrine). But Jesus is the Son of God, and, therefore, the Bible is the Word of God. Any thought of the limitation on His knowledge or the accommodations of His teaching, so that Jesus could have been wrong, has already been shown to be contrary to both His character and the facts of the case (see chapter 10). It was not a matter of accommodation but divine affirmation when Jesus said, "All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me" (Mat. 28:18); "He who sent me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him" (Mat. 28:18), and "Heaven and earth will

pass away, but My word will not pass away” (Mat. 24:35).

CHAPTER 12: THE BIBLE IS THE WORD OF GOD AND ANYTHING OPPOSED TO IT IS FALSE

Building from the foundation to the pinnacle, our twelve points look like this:

In review, our twelve points that show Christianity is true are:

(1) Truth about reality is knowable.

(2) Opposites cannot both be true.

(3) It is true that the theistic God exists.

(4) Miracles are possible.

(5) Miracles performed in connection with a truth claim confirm the truth of God through a messenger of God.

(6) The New Testament documents are reliable.

(7) As witnessed in the New Testament, Jesus claimed to be God.

(8) Jesus' claim to be God was proven by a unique convergence of miracles.

(9) Therefore, Jesus was God in human flesh.
(10) Whatever Jesus (who is God) affirmed as true, is true.
(11) Jesus affirmed that the Bible is the Word of God.
(12) Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God and whatever is opposed to any biblical truth is false.

The twelfth point is both the final point and the last chapter of this book because it the conclusion and the climax of this whole book. But what does it mean to say the Bible is the Word of God and whatever is opposed to it is false? This does not mean there is no truth outside the Bible. Even the Bible says there is. For the Bible speaks of a special revelation of God (Mat. 5:17-18; John 10:35) and also a general revelation "written in our hearts" (Rom. 2:12-15) and in the heavens. For "the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psa. 19:1). Paul said in Romans, "What may be known

about God is manifest in them [unbelievers], for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:19-20). So there are many truths that we can learn from general revelation that is available to all men that are outside the Bible. All truth is God's truth no matter where it is found—whether in the Bible or in general revelation.

And since people who hold to other religions, which have many premises in them contrary to the Bible, they are, nonetheless, not ignorant of "general revelation." Thus, it should be no surprise that some of God's truth is found in other religions. Indeed, the Bible cites some truths found in other sources on several occasions (Acts 17:28; 1 Cor. 15:33; Titus 1:12).

Moral Truths in Other Religions

Also, there are moral truths in other religions. This is so because God has a natural law "written on the hearts" of all men. C. S. Lewis makes a strong case for this in his book, *The Abolition of Man*, in which he concludes, "This thing which I have called for convenience the Tao, and which others may call Natural Law . . ., is not one among a series of possible systems of value. It is the sole source of all value judgments. If it is rejected, all value is rejected. . . . the effort to refute it and raise a new system of value in its place is self-contradictory."[201] Indeed, Lewis places in his book an excellent Appendix which culls from many of the great non-Christian cultures of the world moral principles that are very much like those in the Ten Commandments. Confucius, for example, had what has been called the negative Golden Rule because it says, "Do not do to others what you would not have them do to you." This compliments but does not contradict what Jesus said in Mat. 7:12: "Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them." There are many other good moral principles in other religions such as honor your parents, do not lie, do not steal, and do not murder.

Theological Truths in Other Religions

Likewise, there are some theological truths in other religions. As Romans declares, **"**His invisible attributes are *clearly seen*, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Rom. 1:20, emphasis added). This is evident in the fact that even pagan religions have a concept of a "High God" or "Sky God" that is theistic.[202] Indeed, one of the earliest records we have, *The Ebla Tablets* from Syria speak of a theistic God who created the world out of nothing *(ex nihilo*). It declares, "Lord, of heaven and earth: the earth was not, you created it, the morning light you had not [yet] made exist" (*Ebla Archives*, 259). In brief, we are by no means claiming that there is no truth in other religions, no matter how errant other teachings in these religions are.

What This Does Not Mean

Our twelfth point affirms: "Therefore, it is true that the Bible is the Word of God and whatever is opposed to any biblical truth is false." This means that whatever is opposed to the truth of the Bible is false. Everything the Bible affirms as true, is true. But not all that is true is in the Bible. And since, the opposite of true is false, then it follows that anything taught anywhere outside the Bible that contradicts anything taught in the Bible is necessarily false.

The Final Word

We have come a long way. Now hear the conclusion of the whole matter. We have seen that the essential claims of Christianity are true. And these, as we have seen through the first eleven chapters, include the following:

To be sure, there are more important truths to Christianity than these. But these are core teachings of the Christian Faith. And, including the others taught in the Bible, which is the Word of God (point 12), they constitute essential Christianity.

Hence, *we can conclude that Christianity (in its essential teachings) is true, and whatever is opposed to any of these teachings is false.* In short, Christianity is the true religion, and any other religion that opposes its core teachings is a false religion as such, regardless of whatever other truths it may contain.

In short, there are very good reasons to believe Christianity is true and all opposing religions are not. Thus, it is reasonable to accept Christ as ones Lord and Savior. For the evidence shows that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins (1 Cor. 15:1-6) and that He rose again from the dead. All that is left for you to do is to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31). If you have come to believe in Him, we encourage you to talk to God about it. Christianity isn't just a set of beliefs; it's a relationship with the living God!

A PRAYER OF FAITH

If you have difficulty finding the words to voice your thoughts to God, here is a simple prayer you could use as a model.

Dear God,

I believe that you are the Creator of all things. I also know that you are perfectly holy and cannot tolerate sin.

Lord, I know that I am a sinner who has fallen short of your holy standards and that I deserve to suffer the consequences of my sins.

But I thank you for graciously providing a way of forgiveness for my sins through the death and resurrection of your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ for my sins.

I now turn away from my sins and accept by faith your free gift of salvation apart from any merit or good works on my part.

Please teach me and guide me through your Holy Word, the Bible, and help me to live day-by-day a life of good works for you.

Also, help me to find a good church where I can grow in fellowship with other believers.

Thank you in Jesus' Name. Amen!

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[1] There is, of course, abstract truth like mathematics and purely mental constructs, but they tell us nothing about the real world as such but merely about possibilities. Of course, these logical constructs can be applied to the real world. For if 2 plus 2 is 4 abstractly, then 2 actual pencils plus 2 more actual pencils will make 4 actual pencils.

[2] See Norman L. Geisler, *Baker's Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* [hereafter *BECA*], "Truth."

[3] Rene Descartes, *Meditations on the First Philosophy*, Meditation I.

[4] Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*.

[5] See Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, chapter 1.

[6] See Jay Budziszewski, *What We Cannot Not Know*.

[7] See Norman L. Geisler, *The Reincarnation Sensation.*

[8] See Geisler, *BECA*, "Pluralism, Religious."

[9] See Geisler, *BECA*, "Zen Buddhism."

[10] Alan Watts, *The Book*: *On the Taboo against Knowing Who You Are*, p. 20.

[11] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 24.

[12] The Bible says, "His ways are unsearchable, and His judgments past finding out" (Rom. 11:33 cf. Deut. 29:29 and Eph. 3:19).

[13] Carl Sagan, *COSMOS*, p. 4.

[14] "Kalam" is the Arabic word for eternal. Several Medieval Arabian philosophers (like Al-Ghazali and Al-Kindi) defended this argument, as did the Medieval Christian philosopher, Bonaventure. A strong contemporary evangelical defense of it is found in William Lane Craig's book, *The Kalam Cosmological Argument*.

[15] David Hume, *Letters* I, p. 187.

[16] Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, p. 15-16.

[17] Many scientists offer other evidence that the universe had a beginning such as the expanding universe, the micro-wave radiation, Einstein's general theory of relativity, and the great mass of energy discovered by the Hubble telescope. This "Big Bang" evidence has convinced most astrophysicists. But even some of this evidence is disputed, the whole argument rests on the indisputable evidence of the Second Law for which there are no exceptions.

[18] Robert Jastrow, in an interview in *Christianity Today* (August 6, 1983), p. 15.

[19] Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, p. 115.

[20] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* 1.2.3 ("Third Way").

[21] That is, there is nothing contradictory about the non-existence of everything. A total state of nothingness is a possible state of affairs.

[22] Some have posed a problem, claiming that this argument does not disprove pantheism. In short, it only proves that I exist and an eternal necessary Being exists. Maybe I am God. This "hole" can be plugged quickly by pointing out that (1) I change, (2) God does not change, and (3) hence, I am not God. The pantheist acknowledges that he changes because he did not always think I was God. [Do you want to say "I"?] But God did. Hence, the pantheists is not God.

[23] See J. D. Barrow, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle*, for the most detailed description of it.

[24] See Hugh Ross, *The Creator and the Cosmos*, p. 111-121. This evidence has been put together beautifully in book (and DVD) titled *The Privileged Planet* by Guillermo Gonzalez.

[25] Robert Jastrow, "A Scientist Caught between Two Faiths: An Interview with Robert Jastrow," in Christianity Today 26 (13):15 (1982).

[26] Atheists sometimes respond to the anthropic principle by arguing that the fact that the universe is here is proof that it just happened that way, otherwise it would not be here. But this is like arguing that a painting does not need a painter because it would not look like a painting if all the colors and pigments were not the way they just happen to be.

[27] Cited by Fred Heeren, *Show Me God: What the Message from Space Is Telling Us About God* (Wheeling, IL: Search Light, 1995), p. 66

[28] Alan Sandage, "A Scientist Reflects on Religious Belief," Truth, Vol. 1 (Dallas: Truth Incorporated, 1985), p. 54

[29] Michael Behe, *The Edge of Evolution*, p. 212.

[30] Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, p. 193.

[31]Micahel Behe, *The Edge of Evolution*.

[32] Francis Crick, *Life Itself: Its Origin and Nature*, p. 88.

[33] Sir Fred Hoyle, *Evolution from Space*, p. 3, 143.

[34] Richard Dawkins, *The Blind Watchmaker* (1987), p. 17-18, 116.

[35] Herbert Yockey, *The Journal of Theoretical Biology* (1981), p. 91.

[36] If the atheist rejects this premise, then he has rejected the very principle of uniformity by which we know the past, namely, that the kind of causes we see repeatedly producing a certain kind of effect in the present is the same kind of cause we should posit for producing that kind of thing in the past. Without this principle of uniformity there is no science of the past. So, the theist's reasoning to an intelligent cause of first life is scientific, but the opposing view is not.

[37] Carl Sagan, *Broca's Brain*, p. 275.

[38] Carl Sagan, *COSMOS*, p. 278.

[39] Anthony Flew, *There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist changed His Mind*, p. 112.

[40] See C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (Part One).

[41] C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, p. 45, 46.

[42] Jay Budziszewski, "Objections, Obstacles, Acceptance," an interview by Ignatius Press (2006).

[43] Francis Collins, *The Language of God*, p. 218.

[44] See C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, Appendix.

[45] See Sigmund Feud, *The Future of an Illusion*, chapter 6.

[46] See Ludwig Feuerbah, *The Essence of Christianity*, chapter 1.

[47] Collins, *The Language of God*, p. 38.

[48] Ibid.

[49] Bertrand Russell in a *Letter to Lady Ottoline*.

[50] Eric Fromm, *Psychoanalysis and Religion*, p. 22.

[51] Ludwig Feuerebach, *The Essence of Christianity*, p. 36.

[52] This is from Jean Paul Sartre's autobiography titled *Words*, p. 102, 97.

[53] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Part Four, "The Magician."

[54] Albert Camus, *The Rebel*, p. 147.

[55] St. Augustine, *Confessions* 1.1.

[56] Jay Budziszewski, *The Revenge of Conscience*, p. xii.

[57] Nietzsche, *Antichrist*, p. 627.

[58] Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, p. 113-114.

[59] Richard Lewontin in *New York Review of Books*, 1/9/96.

[60] God has to be infinite since every finite being needs a cause. Hence, the Cause of all finite beings must be not finite (i.e., infinite). For if He were finite, then He would need a cause and not be the Cause of every finite being (which does need a cause).

[61] Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*, p. 115.

[62] See Norman L. Geisler, *BECA*, "Miracles, False" and "Miracles and Magic."

[63] A fifth cause can be listed as "satanic." Granted that an evil spirit being exists, his action can be identified by the evil that is associated with them. In the Bible these actions includes such things as deceptions (Gen. 3:5; 2 Thess. 2:9), depravity (1 Tim. 4:3-4; Jude 7), false doctrine (Col. 2:8-9; 1 John 4:1), false predictions (Deut. 18:21-22), the use of mediums (Deut. 18:11), the use of idols or images (Exod. 20:3-4), and divination (Deut.18:11).

[64] Michael Behe, *Darwin's Black Box*, p. 38.

[65] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 109.

[66] See Francis Crick, in his book *Life Itself*, wrote: "An honest man, armed with all the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost *a miracle*, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going" (emphasis added).

[67] The experiments of Urey and Miller did not produce life from non-life. They produced only amino acids and that only after intelligent intervention in the process (in the choice of chemicals, in the apparatus used, and in the process used). Further, cloning begins with parts from living things to produce other living things. Finally, even if scientists eventually produce life from non-life it will only prove it took an intelligent cause to do it—not purely natural causes.

[68] David Hume, *An Inquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Book X

[69] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, 10.1.18.

[70] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Natural Understanding*, Book10.1.122–23.

[71] Ibid., 10.1.122–23.

[72] Jaki, *Miracles and Physics*, p. 23.

[73] Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 105.

[74] The most complete collections of essays in defense of miracles is found in Doug Geivett, ed., *In Defense of Miracles*.

[75] Richard Whately, *Historical Doubts Concerning the Existence of Napolean Bonaparte*, p. 274, 290.

[76] David Hume, *An Abstract of Treatise on Human Nature*, p. 14–16.

[77] Methodological naturalism (unlike metaphysical naturalism which denies miracles by nature) affirms only that the so-called "scientific" method demands that we posit only natural causes for events in the natural world.

[78] Of course, if scientists can show an event (like a lunar eclipse), though only occasional, is part of a regular pattern, then it is the proper object of science. But such is not the case with miracles in the Bible that are not part of any natural pattern and, hence, cannot be predicted as such.

[79] See Ernst Troeltsch, "Historiography," in *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. James Hastings.

[80] Antony Flew, "Miracles" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Paul Edwards.

[81] Of course, God can perform a miracle any time He wishes, connected or not with any truth claim by a prophet of God. However, such supernatural acts have no apologetic value to establish the truth of any religion.

[82] Strangely, the Qur'an records no miracles of nature for Muhammad such as Jesus did. In fact, Muhammad even refused to do such miracles (Sura 3:181–84). Only centuries later did Muslims (in the *Hadith*) make miracles claims for Muhammad in an attempt to match the claims of Christians for Christ (see Geisler, *Answering Islam*, chapter 8).

[83] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Book 10.

[84] Bertrand Russell, *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, ed. Robert E. Egner and Lester E. Denonn, p. 584.

[85] See Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction to the Bible*, chapter 22.

[86] Sir Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 288 f.

[87] Robertson, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 14.

[88] Archibald T. Robinson, *An Introduction to the Textual Criticism of the New Testament*, p. 14.

[89] See Gary Habermas, "Why I Believe the New Testament is Historically Reliable" in *Why I Am A Christian*, ed. Norman L. Geisler and Paul Hoffman, p. 148.

[90] Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, p. 55 (emphasis added).

[91] See Geisler and Nix, *General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 431 (emphasis added).

[92] See Colin Hemer, *Acts in the Setting of Hellenic History*.

[93] See Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, chapter 6.

[94] Some of the other arguments include the following: (1) Primitive formulation of Christian terminology is used in Acts which reflects an earlier period. (Harnack lists a number of Christological titles: *Iusous* and *Ho kurios* are used often, whereas *Ho Christos* always designates `the Messiah', and not a proper name, and *Christos* is otherwise used only in formal combinations). (2) Rackham points to the optimistic tone of Acts which would not have been there after Judaism had been destroyed and Christians martyred in the Neronian persecutions of the late 60s. (3) The ending of the books of Acts is abrupt. Surely, if Paul had died by then, for example, that would have been mentioned (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6-8). (4) The "immediacy" of Acts 27-28. (5) The prevalence of insignificant details of a cultural milieu of early, even Julio-Claudian, date fits with an early date. (6) There are areas of controversy within Acts which presuppose the relevance of an early Jewish setting while the Temple was still standing. See Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenic History*, p. 376-387.

[95] A. N. Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, p. 189.

[96] The external evidence for Acts is also good, having been cited by *The Didache*, Tatian, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexander, Eusebius, and listed in the Muratorian Canon (see D. A. Carson et. al. *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 185-186).

[97] A. T. France, *The Evidence for Jesus*, p. 124.

[98] See Colin Hemer, ibid., and William Ramsay, *St. Paul the Traveller and the Roman Citizen.*

[99] Sherwin-White, ibid., p. 187.

[100] Ibid., p. 188-191.

[101] For an explanation of the differences in John from the synoptic Gospels see Norman L. Geisler, "John, Gospel Of" in *BECA*.

[102] William F. Albright, *From Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 23.

[103] William F. Albright, "Toward a More Conservative View," in *Christianity Today* (1/18/63), p. 359, emphasis added.

[104] William F. Albright, "Recent Discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of John" in W, D, Davies ed., in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*.

[105] Albright, *The Archaeology of Palestine*, p. 229.

[106] John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, p. 352-354.

[107] Julius Muller, *The Theory of Myths in its Application to Gospel History, Examined and Confuted*, p. 29.

[108] Sherwin-White, *Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament*, p. 190.

[109] William Craig, *Knowing the Truth About the Resurrection*, p. 101.

[110] See Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 154.

[111] Tim Callahan (*Secret Origins of the Bible*) list the Luke 2:2 reference to Quirinis as an

error. But he totally ignores the response given to this by reputable scholars that Luke is not saying that Quirinius was governor of Syria when Jesus was born. Rather, Luke refers to a census that began earlier by Quirinius but was still in effect later when Jesus was born during the reign of Caesar Augustus (4 B.C. and following) as Luke said (Luke 2:1). Sir William Ramsay found verification of such a census that began earlier around 8-7 B.C. (see his *Was Christ Born in Bethlehem*? 1898). One such ancient census took 40 year to complete (see Geisler, *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties*, p. 384).

[112] See Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*.

[113] D. A. Carson, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 282-283.

[114] This list is given by See Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 154.

[115] Gary Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 154.

[116] Ibid., p. 158.

[117] Habermas, ibid., p. 162-164.

[118] Habermas, ibid., p. 165.

[119] For a defense of the fact that these conflicts are only apparent but not real see, Norman L. Geisler and Thomas Howe, *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties.*

[120] Of course, most scholars believe Jesus actually spoke in Aramaic and some argue that he also could speak Hebrew. Since the Gospels (and the entire New Testament) is written in Greek, we only have a translation of Jesus words. Also, at times there appears to be a summary or abridgement of what Jesus said (observable by comparing one Gospel to another), but here too the Gospel writers evidence that they are presenting the actual teachings of Jesus, not their own. Thus, while we do not claim to have the same words (*ipsissima verba*) of Jesus (in Aramaic) in the Gospels, nonetheless, the Gospel writers are providing the same meaning (*ipsissima vox*).

[121] The fact that terrorists die for what they believe to be true (but may be false) is not relevant. No terrorist ever saw the seventy-two virgins or Paradise Islam offers him after death. But the New Testament witnesses actually saw and heard what they recorded, namely, Jesus' words and miracles.

[122] Gary Habermas, The *Historical Jesus***,** Chapter 9.

[123] Ibid., p. 150.

[124] Ibid., p. 243-250.

[125] See Geisler, *Systematic Theology*: *Introduction and Bible*, vol. 1, chapter 11.

[126] See Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, "God, Alleged Disproofs of." Michael Martin edited a book on *The Impossibility of God*, but none of his arguments reach the level of a logical disproof.

[127] Habermas, *The Historical Jesus*, p. 154.

[128] See the satire on this criticism that we should reject the New Testament because it contains unusual claims by Richard Whately in *Historical Doubts Relative to the Existence of Napoleon Bonaparte* in *Famous Pamphlets*, ed. H. Morley (New York: Routledge, 1890).

[129] See the account of the unusualness of the Big Bang theory and the unusual reaction by many scientists in Robert Jastrow's, *God and the Astronomers*, chapter 6).

[130] See Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Introduction and Bible*, chapter. 2.

[131] See Robert Thomas and F. David Farnell, *The Jesus Crisis*, p. 367f.

[132] See Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History,* 3.24.6.

[133] See Geisler, "John, Gospel of" in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, p. 388 f.).

[134] See Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John's Gospel*.

[135] See Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*, p. 159.

[136] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 48.

[137] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 109.

[138] See Wise, Abegg, and Cook translation *In Vanderkam*, MDSS, p. 336.

[139] From *Vanderkam*, MDSS, p. 333.

[140] That this was not a mere emotional exclamation but an affirmation of Jesus deity is clear from the fact that it is the climax of a growing recognition (John 11:27) of who He was by His disciples in a book whose purpose was to show He was "the Son of God" (John 20:30-31) and by Jesus' response commending him for his insight (John 2:29).

[141] Daniel predicted that it would be 483 years from 444 B.C. to the time the Messiah died. Professor Harold Hoehner (*Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*, Zondervan, 1978) shows that in actual years this prediction comes to A.D. 33 when Jesus died. From 444 B.C. to A.D. 33 is 477 Jewish lunar years (of 360 days), and with the other 5 days (to match the actual calendar) multiplied times 483 there is another 6 years, added to 477 gives 483 years.

[142] See S. R. Driver, ed., *The Fifty Third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters*.

[143] Indeed, there are scrolls, including many of these found in the Dead Sea area, that are dated a century or more before the time of Christ, including the whole book of Isaiah. Even accepting the critics late date for Daniel (c.165 B.C.), it predicted the time of the Messiah's death (Dan. 9) almost 200 years in advance.

[144] See Norman L. Geisler and Pat Zukeran, *The Apologetics of Jesus*, chapter 10.

[145] Skeptic Tim Callahan (*The Secret Origins of the Bible*, 415) wrongly supposed this prophecy was not true because Jesus spoke up to Pilate (John 18:37-38). However, Isaiah is speaking only of His silence before His *Jewish* accusers (v. 8), not his Gentile judge. In the dialog with Pilate, there are two important differences. First, Pilate is not the accuser. He was judging the accusations others had made. Second, he was not Jewish but Roman. When actually accused by the Jews, the Bible says clearly, "The high priest arose and said to Him [Jesus], 'Do you answer nothing?'. . . But *Jesus kept silent*" (Matt. 26:62-63, emphasis added).

[146] See Bertrand Russell, "Why I am not a Christian," in *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, ed. Robert E. Egner, p. 593-594.

[147] Ibid.

[148] *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, vol. 6, 1954), p. 51.

[149] See Horace Bushnell, *The Character of Jesus*, 1888).

[150] Bertrand Russell, "Why I am not a Christian," in *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, p. 586.

[151] Bertrand Russell, "Why I Am An Agnostic," in *The Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, p. 579.

[152] See Richard Gerrier, *The Ghandi Nobody Knows*.

[153] Horace Bushnell, *The Character of Christ: Forbidding His Possible Classification with Men*, p. 66.

[154] Ibid., p. 77.

[155] Ibid., p. 19.

[156] The view of many Muslims is that someone else (like Judas) was used as a substitute for Jesus, but the evidence stated below clearly refutes that idea.

[157] David Strauss, *A New Life of Jesus* (1879), I.412.

[158] F. F. Bruce, *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*, 113 (emphasis added)

[159] Geisler, *Christian Apologetics*, p. 323.

[160] Bruce, 114.

[161] Phlegon, *Chronicles*, cited by Origen, 4:455.

[162] Ibid., p. 445.

[163] Ignatius, p. 107.

[164] Martyr, p. 253.

[165] Even critics agree that 1 Corinthians was written by A. D. 55—56.

[166] Mat. 28:9 declares that the women "came and *held Him by the feet*." And in John 20:17 He said to Mary, "*Stop clinging to me*; for I have not yet ascended to my Father. . . ."

[167] See Robert Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology: with Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology.* 1976.

[168] 1 John 4:2 says "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh." This is a perfect participle, meaning He came in the past in the flesh and He remains now (after His resurrection) in the flesh. 2 John 7 uses the same phrase "come in the flesh" but with the present particple, meaning He is still now in the present (after His resurrection) in the flesh. The early Christian Creeds, beginning with the Apostles Creed spoke of resurrection "in the flesh" and even spoke of Jesus ascending in the flesh to the right hand of God (see Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection*, chapter 4).

[169] There is no justification for some translations, like the NIV, translating the Greek word *sarx* here as "body." Indeed, the NIV is inconsistent since it translates the same word *sarx* as flesh when speaking of the resurrection body in Luke 24:39.

[170] See Geisler, *The Battle for the Resurrection*, chapters 3, 7, and 8.

[171] Illusionist Brock Gill. *The Miracles of Jesus* (BBC Worldwide: 2006).

[172] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Book X.

[173] Robert Price, ed., *The Empty Tomb*, p. 174.

[174] Against the objection that the virgin birth is an insult to nature, C. S. Lewis cleverly observes out that "they think they see in this miracle a slur upon sexual intercourse (though they might just as well see in the feeding of the five thousand an insult to bakers) . . . ." (*Miracles*, p. 142).

[175] See C. S. Lewis on this point of how true miracles "fit" with nature (*Miracles*, chapter 15).

[176] Ibid., p. 140.

[177] See James Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire*. Also Howard Clark Kee, *Miracle in the Early Christian World*.

[178] See Archie Bahm, *Tao Teh King*, 2nd ed., p. 89.

[179] See the excellent articles by Gary Habermas, "Resurrection Claims in Non-Christian Religions," *Religious Studies* 25 (1989); p. 167-177 and chapter 12 by David Clark in "Miracles in World Religions" in Doug Gievett ed., *In Defense of Miracles.*

[180] C. S. Lewis, *Miracles*, p. 138.

[181] See Norman L. Geisler, "Appolonius of Tyana," in *BECA.*

[182] J. Fergeson, *Religions of the Roman Empire*, p. 182.

[183] Ibid., p. 51.

[184] For miracles found in the *Hadith*, see Muhammad ibn Isma`il Bukhari, *The Translation of the Meaning of Sahih Al-Bukhari*. Many of the points in this section were suggested by an unpublished paper on Islamic miracles by Mark Foreman (see n. 24 in chapter 9).

[185] See Ali Dashti, *Twenty Three Years: A Study of the Prophetic Career of Muhammad* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985), p. 48-49.

[186] See Ali, ibid., p. 1731, note 6109.

[187] See N. L. Geisler, *Answering Islam*, chapter 9.

[188] So humiliating was the defeat that they "pulled out two links of chain from Muhammad's wound, and two of his front teeth fell off in the process." In addition the Muslim dead were mutilated on the battlefield by the enemy. One enemy even "cut off a number of noses and ears in order to make a string and

necklace of them." See Haykal, p. 266–67.

[189] God is infinite (unlimited) in His being, for everything that is limited has a cause. Hence, that Cause must be not-limited. If it were, then it would need a cause. So, God is unlimited in His being. But God is a knowing Being, as was established by the teleological argument (chapter 3). Hence, God must be unlimited in His knowledge. And since He created time (with matter and space), as the cosmological argument showed (see chapter 3), then He must not be limited by time. He is beyond time or eternal. As such, He does not know just the present or past, but He also knows the future. Indeed, everything that exists or ever will exist pre-existed in Him as its primary Cause. God pre-knew all that would be in Himself from all eternity just as an author pre-knows the whole story He will later tell chapter by chapter in a book.

[190] For further discussion of the Accommodation and Limitations views see "Accommodation Theory" in Norman L. Geisler, *BECA* and John Wenham, *Christ and the Bible.*

[191] For further discussion on Christ's human nature that did not sin compared to the Bible's human nature that does not err, see Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Introduction and the Bible*, chapter 15.

[192] The idea that there were two persons--one God and one man--is the error of Nestorianism. If this were true, then the human person who died for us was not divine, and, hence, His death has no divine significance to atone for our sins. Only the God-man can mediate between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). So, if one and the same person was not both God and man, then He could not be our mediator.

[193] What Jesus affirmed as God *could not* err because God cannot err). What Jesus taught as man *could have* erred because He was human, and it is possible (though not necessary) for humans to err. But in both cases Jesus *did not* err.

[194] Anthropomorphism means literally "human form." The idea here is that God adapts Himself to a human way of speaking to get His point across to humans. For example, the Bible speaks of "the eyes" of God (Heb. 4:12) to vividly depict His ability to see into our hearts. But an infinite God does not have finite things like eyes as we know them.

[195] Indeed, Jesus' disciples rooted many New Testament teachings on creation account in Genesis (Rom. 5:12; 1 Tim. 2:13-14; 1 Cor. 11:8, 15:22, 45).

[196] Of course, while the apostles were still alive, their oral teaching was also authoritative (cf. Acts 2:42; 2 Thes. 2:2), but the only authentic record of their oral teaching we have now is found in the New Testament.

[197] See Edgar Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols.

[198] See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.11.9.

[199] As cited by Edwin Yamauchi, *The Word from Nag Hammadi*, p. 22.

[200] Edwin Yamauchi, "The Word from Nag Hammadi. in *Christianity Today*, 13 Jan, 1978.

[201] C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man*, p. 56.

[202] John S. Mbiti, in his noted works on pre-literate religions, *African Religions and Philosophy* and *Concepts of God in Africa*, demonstrates that native African beliefs have a theistic background of a Creator God who made the world and its creatures. This is evidence of general revelations spoken about by Scripture (in Rom. 1:19:20; Acts 14, and 17). See also Don Richardson, *Eternity in their Hearts*.