

Authority of the Scriptures

Note: The following is from a booklet entitled *Authority Of The Scriptures*. The formatting of the booklet can not be reproduced on this web page.

I. Introduction: We present to you a paper outlining not only a formal argument for the authenticity and authority of the Bible, but also some reasons for submitting it to you. We have attempted to keep it sufficiently brief and simple so that anyone who would but take the time would be able to read and understand it. We have also tried to make it thorough enough that it would be both a useful teaching resource and an evangelistic tool for those of you who may encounter others who have doubts about the Bible's veracity. This outline provides sufficient information to establish that the Bible we have today is not only a reliable reproduction of the original text, but that the text itself could only have been produced by the God of Heaven. While the following information is no substitute for studying the Bible itself and cannot be "the words" that save a man's soul, it nevertheless should prove to be a valuable resource to strengthen faith and to assist in the building of faith in others who do not have the same confidence that we do. It is to this end that we provide this paper to you.

Please take the time to read and, preferably, to study the information provided. It is our considered opinion that the greatest obstacle to evangelism in the twenty-first century is the skepticism that the Bible is the complete, unadulterated, once-for-all delivered Word of God. If we hope to share faith with others we must be well acquainted with the evidence that undergirds that faith. While we can argue that the Parable of the Sower suggests to us that our task is simply to plant seed, that is, spread the Word, we surely cannot be insensitive to the stumbling blocks that Satan places between the lost and his God. This parable presents different kinds of soil all of which, except one, do not submit, either immediately or over time, to the Word. The people represented by three of the four soils either reject the Word outright or eventually let something pull them away from it. Therefore, we could conclude, and rightly so, that it is not our task to convert the sinner. That burden is not laid at our feet. The sinner must come to God of his own free will by the power of the Word of God. If we left this message lie here we could easily say that we will simply proclaim the Word and let the sinner do with it as he will. But this attitude does not allow for the possibility that the unproductive soil, that is, the heart of the sinner, need not be set for all time. Love compels us to attempt to alter the soil if the opportunity presents itself. The content of this paper addresses what we consider to be the major soil contaminating issue of our generation. Please give this information a thorough consideration.

When you first look at this document you may be daunted by its size, a thirty page outline. It is not easy to get a large number of people to take the time to read a document of this length. In spite of the size of the task, we encourage you by putting the challenge into perspective. Consider the following:

1. While it is thirty pages long it is also in outline form and 12 point font. Outline

form takes less time to read and 12 point font is a fairly large print.

2. Casual reading takes from one to three minutes to read a page, depending on the content of the page.

3. Using the maximum time of three minutes to read a page, it would take ninety minutes, maximum, to read the document (actually more like an hour). This is the length of three to four sermons. It is also about the same time as two Sunday morning Bible studies, one and one-half Wednesday evening assemblies, one half of a football game, half a movie, three TV sitcoms, or one and one half hour long TV shows. Some of us probably spend more time in two days reading the local newspaper.

4. One could read this document in a week by taking only about ten minutes a day.

Arming ourselves for the challenge of the generation does not take as much time as we are inclined to think.

Of course we encourage you to do more than read. We encourage you to read, consider, and study. Try to imagine yourselves attempting to explain our confidence in the Bible to one who is not convinced that the Bible is the authentic, authoritative, and complete Word of God. We do not contend that this in any way fully prepares us for all questions and encounters, but it is a beginning. It is the foundation upon which all that we believe rests. Let us prepare to proclaim it.

II. Divine Inspiration of the Bible as a Foundational Principle:

A. We Must Be Prepared to Give a “Defense” of the Scriptures: If we ever have the good fortune of entering into dialogue with a neighbor, a friend, a family member, an associate, or a mere acquaintance about spiritual matters, it will not be long before we are asked the question, “What church do you attend?” We will probably reply quickly, and somewhat proudly, that we are members of the Church of Christ. If the conversation continues in a serious vein for very long, another question that will often arise is, “What do you believe?” As adroitly as we field the first question, we will most likely fumble the second. We might reply to the second question with “We believe the Bible” or with “That is a difficult question to answer.” Then we might, if we maintain our composure, attempt to find a brochure written by some brother we do not know that will tell the inquirer something about what we believe. Whatever we do, we usually do not do a very good job of giving a “defense” to the one who asked about what we believe. If we are the people of God, if we are to “give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15), if we are to speak “as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11), then we should be about the business of preparing a defense. In reality this “defense” is not a defense at all, but an offense. Not an “offense” as in offensive, not an “offense” as in an attack, but an “offense” as in a positive proclamation of what we believe.

B. Establishing Some Foundational Principles: We are not sure why we have difficulty with the question, "What do you believe?" While we may not have a good "defense" in our arsenal of spiritual weapons, we are not without knowledge of an array of Bible doctrines. Our problem may be more that we know much, but do not know where to begin with what we know. Possibly we know a lot about our faith, but we have not troubled ourselves with making sense of it. Maybe we are afraid we will not say the right thing. Or even more maybe we are afraid that what we say will not parrot the party line in every respect, so to speak. Maybe we fear criticism from a brother, sister, elder or preacher, or whomever, that thinks we should say something different than we would. Or maybe we are afraid that any summary statement, however constructed, would be seen as a catechism or a creed, which is anathema in our fellowship. While we recognize that we must avoid looking at the New Testament like a catechism, we all probably have an unofficial list of doctrines stored away in our brains, not unlike a creed. Officially we reject such notions and, as a result, avoid summarizing our beliefs to such an extent that we are often ineffective in responding to the question, "What do you believe?"

Creeds, as sets of faith principles, are not bad until they become official testimonies to fellowship or until they are substituted for the whole of divine revelation, a sort of short-cut to Christianity. It would probably be a good exercise periodically to summarize, privately or publicly, faith principles in order that we could better communicate what we believe. This does not mean that my set of doctrines will duplicate your set or that my set today will be my set next week. My objective would not be to set every principle in order, but to put some order to Biblical principles, an order that will serve me in a practical way to fulfill my evangelistic calling. While we would not expect everyone's list to be identical, we would expect that everyone's list would be compatible, that is, they would not contradict. In pursuing the "unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," we should find our set of fundamental principles, while varying in detail, acceptable to all.

C. Two Important Foundational Principles: We suggest that any list of foundational principles must begin with "God is!"

"Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4).

"I am the Lord your God ... You shall have no other Gods before me" (Exodus 20:2-3).

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

These passages, and many more, attest to the first foundational principle of life and of Divine revelation. While it may be possible to argue that there are other principles that are as basic and important as this one, none can supersede or precede the fact that God is. This principle takes us to the beginning, the being, and the end of all things. In all probability this principle, and this principle alone, would receive unanimous agreement throughout all Christendom. Once we move away from this principle, that unity quickly erodes.

The second principle that is frequently asserted in any set of foundational principles is that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that the salvation of man rests in Him. Simon Peter said in response to Jesus' question, "But who do you say that I am?" "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16).

Also, John writes:

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1).

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

And again, Luke writes regarding Jesus Christ of Nazareth: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Countless other passages can be presented that attest that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord of heaven and earth, the Author of eternal salvation, etc.

D. A Third Foundational Principle of Supreme Importance: In our list of principles, the second one stated above should be technically the third. Not that it is less important than either the first or the one which we are about to set forth, but is third because it follows by way of our second principle: **The Bible Is The Complete Inspired Word Of God.**

This second principle is as important as the principle that "God is" for without it we could only surmise from the physical world that God exists and would know nothing in particular about Him. Without the Bible we would not know anything about God's nature, what man's relationship is to Him, what man is to do with his life, or what his destiny is. Furthermore, as important as is the principle that Jesus Christ is the Son of God in whom all salvation rests, we would have no knowledge of such fact without divine revelation, the Bible. Because of this fact, The Bible Is The Complete, Inspired Word Of God, we can know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the One sent to take away the sins of the world. If the Bible is not inspired by God, if it is not completely and irrefutably true, then there really is no "historical Jesus," there is no certainty that there is an atonement for sins, there is not anything but blind groping for God such as must have existed before the Great Flood — if there was a Great Flood. The principle of the divine inspiration of the Bible is supremely important for faith and salvation.

E. Divine Inspiration of the Bible Challenged: There are many levels at which God, the Bible, and Christian faith have been attacked throughout history. Satan is prolific in his assaults and quite inventive in his tactics. He has used, uses, and will continue to use, whenever it suits his advantage, physical frontal assaults on God's people. In this mode we see Satan as the "roaring lion." But he is also insidious and relentlessly

patient, able to erode Christian principles incrementally by tainting them with the philosophies of men and the mores of contemporary culture. This tactic would fall into the category of “the wolf in sheep’s clothing.” Arguably the greatest threat to Christianity in the twenty-first century will be the rejection of the Divine inspiration of the Bible. As self-destructive as it may be, many so-called Christian theologians no longer teach that the Bible is divinely inspired, at least not completely. If these theological scholars have their way, they will tell us what parts of the Bible, if any, are true and which are not. In order to satisfy their own self-gratifying desire to be authoritative, they have destroyed the only hope they have, namely that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that we have salvation in Him alone. By destroying the trust we would have in the Bible, they make the reality of the Christ highly suspect, the hope of the forgiveness of sins vain, and Christian evangelism an exercise in futility.

F. Conclusion: The balance of this paper will present a case for the Divine inspiration of the Bible. It will be helpful to study this material for two reasons:

1. It may secure our faith against the challenges we will face in this century.
2. It will be essential to establish this principle with anyone who may be converted to Jesus Christ.

III. The Case for the Divine Inspiration of the Bible:

A. Internal Biblical Evidence:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

There is no more direct, unequivocal, and powerful statement in all of Scripture that the Bible is God’s complete revelation to man. The phrase “by inspiration of God” means literally “God-breathed” and brings to the mind many images. We may recall the exhilarating image of life being breathed into Adam by God in Genesis 2:7, or we may shudder at the image of God as He descended onto Mt Sinai in Exodus 19 such that the people, fearing greatly, said to Moses, “let not God speak to us, lest we die” (Exodus 20:19). Or maybe one has a profound sense of intimacy in that Scripture comes directly from the mouth of God. Or maybe Scripture takes on a more regal element in that it is a set of edicts direct from the Sovereign Lord. Maybe it is all these ideas, and more. In any event the scriptures claim for themselves that their author is none other than the God of Heaven. Beside this passage there are numerous other internal evidences that proclaim the Bible to be the Word of God. A few of these verses and ideas are listed below:

1. Exodus 20: 1- “And God spoke all these words, saying ...” This expression stands before the presentation of the Ten Commandments as delivered by God to Moses from Mt. Sinai for Israel. It has been determined by scholars that there are over two

thousand (2,000) references in the Bible that claim the message is from God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit. This may not prove that the Bible is from God, but the Bible clearly makes that claim. The burden of proof seems to lie largely with the skeptic to prove that the Bible is not the Word of God.

2. Jude 6 speaks of “the faith,” meaning the message of God, “that was once for all delivered to the saints.” This implies a body of information that came from God in the past that requires no future additions.

3. Revelation 22:18-19 - warns against anyone adding to or taking away from scripture, suggesting the revelation is complete and that it is all divinely approved.

4. John 20: 30-31 - speaks of the sufficiency of that which has been revealed. Enough has been revealed to bring one to faith and eternal life.

B. A Proper View of Scripture: Four Propositions

1. An appropriate view of Scripture would be one that Jesus held: The authority of the Bible rests squarely upon the authority of Jesus Christ Himself. It is utterly inconsistent to say that we accept what the Bible says about Christ and reject what Christ says about the Bible. We cannot say of Jesus that He is the image of the invisible God, that He is the bodily expression of the fullness of God, that He is the source of all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, and that He is before all things and by Him all things hold together, but then say that He is quite wrong about Adam, Noah, Jonah, and the rest of the Old Testament. If we call Him Lord and say He has the right to govern our lives in all its attitudes and ways, even to trust our eternal destiny to Him, then it would be utterly senseless to suggest that He was mistaken about the creation of man, the sanctity of marriage, the sinfulness of certain sexual acts, and countless other doctrinal issues and moral standards. Our Lord accepted the Scriptures without question, used them freely in His teaching, expanded on others, pronounced new ones by His authority, and explained them by and through Himself, never once suggesting that any were not profitable for man. Quite to the contrary, when the Lord Himself faced temptation during one of His weakest moments (see Matthew 4:4, 7, 10), He prevailed over Satan with Scripture, all of which was taken from Deuteronomy, a book much maligned by modern scholarship. If we reject the authority of Scripture in its Divine inspiration, we make a fool of our Lord for using it so. If we claim that Scripture is the writings of mere mortal men, we make the Son of God prevail over Satan by the wisdom of mortals, thus making Jesus of lesser stature than man. Jesus accepted the inspiration of the Scriptures and, as His disciples, so must we.

Additional Scriptures:

a. John 10:35 - The words of Jesus attest that the “Scripture cannot be broken.”

b. Luke 24:25-27 - Jesus uses Scripture to explain His mission and purpose. Without

the Scriptures Jesus would not have been recognized.

c. Luke 4:18-21 - Jesus identifies Himself as the Christ by Scripture.

2. An appropriate view of Scripture would be one that the apostles held. Some people are what are referred to as “Red Letter Christians.” This means they will follow the words of Jesus, but nothing more. If one would look to a Red Letter edition of the Bible the words of Jesus are highlighted in red and this would constitute the whole of Divine revelation, the “Red Letter Christian’s” complete doctrine. Unfortunately for them, the words of Jesus come to man along with the Old Testament, the complete gospel narratives, the book of Acts, the letters, and Revelation. Without the Bible in its entirety, we have no words of Jesus. We may as well fabricate our own words for Him, or for that matter create our own savior, as to receive the words of Jesus but reject the document in which His words come. In the same way one would violate the whole Law when he breaks one point of the Law, we reject the whole Bible when we reject any part of it. If we use an eclectic approach to the Scriptures we, ourselves, become God.

a. John 14:26 - Jesus promises to send a Helper, the Holy Spirit, who will teach the apostles new things and lead them into remembrance of old. This passage contains three important elements:

* there is information to come that will not come directly from Jesus

* there is another, like Jesus, who will reveal it

* the information which is promised to the apostles (Note: in this context Jesus is talking to the original twelve, less Judas.)

b. John 15:26; 16:7; 16:13-15 - these confirm the above with the addition that Jesus must go away for this to be accomplished.

c. 1 Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 1:1-12 - Paul claims his message is not of himself, but from the Lord. Paul’s words qualify for Scripture.

3. We can never discover the depth of insight into life that Scripture holds without first accepting it as true and authoritative. While we are greatly indebted to scholarly work that has shown us that we have a reliable and accurate text for the Bible, unrestrained scholarship is capable of leading us away from truth, rather than nearer to it. A considerable amount of modern scholarly work has moved from confirming the integrity of the text to making dogmatic declarations of which text is inspired and which is not, from which passage was written by the designated author to hypothesizing that some unknown, unrecorded writer was the source, from affirming the accuracy of the words of Jesus to asserting, without evidence, what He actually said and did. These scholars, who believe they are the final authority on what ought and ought not to be included in Scripture, seldom agree with each other. While they

can understand clearly what was not written, they have no understanding of what was. C. S. Lewis writes in his essay *Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism* that these “scholars”:

"... ask me to believe they can read between the lines of the old texts; the evidence is their obvious inability to read (in any sense worth discussing) the lines themselves. They claim to see fern-seed and can't see an elephant ten yards away in broad daylight."

Paul makes an observation appropriate for these modern scholars when he speaks to Timothy of those who are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:7).

Before we can understand the Scriptures we must first believe them. We cannot build a rocket except that we first understand the basic principles of motion. Furthermore, these principles will be of little value, if we do not accept them. This is no less true of the Word of God. We cannot believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, until we believe the Scriptures that reveal His person and purpose to us. If we are constantly doubting the veracity of the Scriptures, if we must constantly evaluate which ones are and which ones are not inspired; if we reject even the least of them as divinely inspired, not only will we be unable to “walk in the light as He is in the light”, we will not be able to walk at all. Like a deer caught in headlights, Satan will have us frozen in his grasp. Only if we believe that the Bible is truly from God will we be able to perceive the marvels of a deliberate structure that can be only of God's making. Only then will we be able to see the astounding insights to life and the explanations of how the human heart operates.

The writer of Proverbs records: "If you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God" (Proverbs. 2:4-5).

4. Scripture does not need to be defended so much as it needs to be declared: Charles Spurgeon, the famous Baptist preacher from England, once said, “The Bible is like a lion. Who ever heard of defending a lion? Just turn it loose, it will defend itself.” Christian apologetics has taken, if not a central, a very important position in Christian literature and discourse. Especially with the advent of the doctrine of Organic Evolution, Christian faith has been tested, twisted, and, sometimes, torn asunder. But while apologetics may be very helpful for a Christian who is confronted with honest questions from one with an honest and sincere heart, it is almost useless in appealing to a hard-hearted skeptic. We live in an age where winning an argument is far more important than being correct about it.

More than arguing the case for the validity of the Scriptures, we need to use them. We must remember that a word in itself is useless. It receives its power because of the one who utters it. The Word of God has inherent power because it comes from God. When a question about spiritual matters arises, we should confront the

individual with the compelling truth from the Scriptures, let the power of the Word go deep into the human heart where it can pierce beyond all the surface objections, and let it bring a man face to face with the choices that he must make. Our greater task is not to defend the Word, but to declare it. If the words of God cannot change a man from his wicked course, words from a mere mortal, however slick or sophisticated, however unkind or coarse, certainly will have no greater effect.

Truth is truth. If it was true ten thousand years ago, it is still true today. Because truth is unchanging we can be assured that the words of a two thousand year old document are as certain today as they were the day they were delivered. The Bible is the final measuring stick of any civilization or any individual life.

IV. Other Evidences That Confirm the Bible: While our greater task is to declare the Word of God and let it take root in the one who hears the Word, it is helpful to reassure ourselves, answer honest questions, and allay fears and doubts in others if we are aware of the length and breadth of the evidence that supports the Bible, externally as well as internally. The following attempts to present only a small portion of the information that contributes to that support:

A. Science, Friend or Enemy of the Bible?

Dr. W. A. Criswell in *The Bible For Today's World* quotes an eminent theologian of a few years ago: "Of course, there are scientific errors in the Bible. However, we can excuse such mistakes on the grounds that the Bible is not a textbook of science and therefore we do not expect it to be scientifically accurate."

While we can agree that the Bible is not a textbook on science, we cannot agree that it contains any errors. If we do we are forced to make some unpleasant, potentially faith destroying conclusions:

- 1.** The Bible was written by a God that did not understand His own creation. This violates the omniscience of God.
- 2.** The God of the Bible that we worship was Himself a product of a mindless evolutionary process that even He did not understand. This violates both God's omniscience and His omnipotence.
- 3.** God purposely confused us with misinformation. This violates 1 Corinthians 14: 33 which states that "God is not the author of confusion..."
- 4.** God, while creator of the universe, did not author the Bible. This violates everything that we have been saying about the authority of the Scriptures and the claims therein.

If the Bible is written by God, it cannot contain errors. If it does, then our God is less of a figure than the scientists that have "proven" Him wrong. How could there be

eternal salvation in such a fallible God? If the Bible was not written entirely by God, which parts were? We would then have to rely on the “experts” to tell us which parts are true. Our salvation would then rely on the opinion of experts, a very distasteful situation. If the Bible were not written by God, then Jesus Christ is a fiction, His death and resurrection a lie, our faith a vain exercise, and we Christians a most pitiful group. We are all still lost in our sins. The proposition that the Bible contains errors is blasphemous.

In spite of the fact that some have attempted to use science to discredit the Bible, science is it's friend. Consider the following:

1. How was Moses able to produce so much scientifically accurate information? Moses lived approximately 3500 years ago in the midst of great superstition and primitive scientific knowledge. He was “...learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians...” (Acts 7: 22). Referring to Dr. Criswell again, Moses would have been taught the accepted Egyptian wisdom. The Egyptians believed:

a. that the earth was hatched out of a great cosmic egg, an egg that had wings and was flying around through space. As this enormous winged egg flew around, the processes of mitosis on the inside of the shell were completed and out hatched this world. Moses taught that “In the beginning, God created...”(Genesis 1:1).

b. that the sun was the reflection of the light on the earth and that the earth was the center of the universe. Moses taught that it was the sun that illuminated the earth (Genesis 1:16-18).

c. that mankind was spawned from little white worms that they found in the slime and mud of the flood deposits after the Nile River's annual overflow (a view not far removed from the modernist's theory of organic evolution). Moses taught, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

There is nothing that came out of any of the ancient civilizations that begins to approximate the biblical account. How did Moses come up with such a unique explanation of the beginning of the world and mankind, a view that is widely accepted today, even among large numbers of scientists? The answer is Divine revelation. Divine revelation will result in accuracy at any point that the Bible intersects with science.

2. Other biblical information that was scientifically accurate centuries before its time:

a. Leviticus. 17:15 - Moses, by the revelation he proclaimed he received from God on Mt. Sinai, taught the people not to eat the meat of an animal that died naturally and for anyone who touched the animal to wash himself and his clothes, remaining

separated from the community until evening. In an age of superstition and primitive scientific knowledge, there is only one way to explain Moses' understanding of communicable disease - Divine revelation. He possessed scientific accuracy before his time.

b. Leviticus 13 - 15 - the principle of quarantine was established. It was not proven until the 18th and 19th centuries that quarantine is necessary to avoid diseases being carried from one person to another.

c. Deuteronomy 23:12-13 - teaches that human waste should not mingle within the community. Not only should it not be littered where the people live, but it should also be buried. Ignorance of this principle was a powerful contributor to the great plagues of the Dark Ages when people simply disposed of their wastes by casting it into the streets of the cities, creating a breeding ground for bacteria, disease, and rats that fed upon it. Even today many people continue to be ignorant of the basic sanitation principle of "washing with water" after taking care of their personal needs. The Bible is an excellent source of sound scientific principles centuries before science made its determinations.

d. Conclusion: Moses revealed things that were totally unknown to the most learned scientists, physicians, and intellectuals of his day because God revealed accurate scientific information to him. Furthermore, if one approaches science and the information derived from that discipline with an unbiased mind, he will find that science is a friend of the Bible and not its enemy. Only when one approaches the Bible with the bias of naturalism, a doctrine that presupposes there is nothing that exists beyond the natural world, will the findings of science be twisted to deny the truth of the Bible.

B. Archaeology: Another Friend of the Bible. Archaeology is the study of past human life that is revealed in the relics of ancient people. This discipline uses scientific methods and tools to help in its investigations, but it is not pure science. While archaeology can provide valuable insights into past civilizations, except where it uncovers written records of the people being investigated, much of the conclusions will be no more than educated guesswork. Except for eye witness testimony, either living or recorded, the conclusions are circumstantial. This does not necessarily invalidate the conclusions of archaeological investigations. Archaeology's primary contribution may be the application of techniques and tools of science in the aid of historical reconstruction.

Note: Interestingly, the scientific community generally recognizes that archaeological findings are valid when they investigate the ancient past, in spite of the fact that the findings can neither be personally witnessed nor reproduced. But, if scientific evidence is presented for the Divine origin of the universe, a consideration which also cannot be personally witnessed or reproduced, many members of that same community reject the findings on the basis that science cannot investigate anything that cannot be seen or demonstrated. There appears to be a double standard for

what can and cannot be investigated by science based upon an anti-God bias, not scientific evidence or any objective search for truth.

While some people assert that "Archaeology proves the Bible," in reality it only provides confirming evidence. Archaeology greatly supports biblical claims by assuring us that the Bible we have today is an accurate account of those things recorded at its inception and by refuting the assertions of the Bible's enemies that it contains errors. Over the last couple of centuries archaeology has made significant contributions that have greatly aided in the areas of manuscript accuracy; the understanding of words used in the Bible; knowledge of the economic, cultural, social, and political background of biblical passages; and the discovery of literally thousands of manuscripts which abundantly attest to the Bible's early origin and accuracy of our modern translations. Archaeology in this sense has been a great friend of the Bible.

1. Manuscript evidence:

- a. As of the year 1986, archaeology has uncovered over 24,000 pieces of manuscript evidence for the New Testament.
- b. There are more than 5,300 known Greek and over 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts of the New Testament.
- c. No other document of antiquity comes close to that amount of manuscript support. The closest document for comparison is the Iliad by Homer with only 643 surviving manuscripts.
- d. Homer's Iliad dates from circa 900 B. C. with the first fragment dating from 500 B. C. and the first complete manuscript dating from the thirteenth century A. D.
- e. By comparison the New Testament was compiled between 40 and 100 A. D. with the first fragment dating from A. D. 125 and the earliest complete manuscripts dating from circa 325 - 350.
- f. There is a period of over 400 years between the creation of the Iliad and its first surviving manuscript fragment. Between the inception of the New Testament and its first manuscript evidence there is only 25 years. Furthermore, between the inception of the Iliad and its first complete manuscript there is about 2,000 years. Between the completion of the Bible and its first complete manuscript there is only about 225 years.
- g. One final comparison (among many) is the history compiled by the Greek, Herodotus. Herodotus lived 480-425 B. C. There are only 8 manuscripts surviving. The earliest of these comes circa A. D. 900. A gap of about 1300 years exists between the source and the earliest copy. Yet, no scholar doubts that we have a reliable copy of the works of Herodotus.

h. Josh McDowell in *Evidence That Demands A Verdict* quotes F. J. A. Hort on p. 41, "...in the variety and fullness of the evidence on which it rests the text of the New Testament (sic) stands absolutely and unapproachably alone among ancient prose writings."

i. If we cannot accept that we have an accurate account of the New Testament based upon the manuscript evidence, we must reject every piece of ancient literature. McDowell quotes John Warwick Montgomery on p. 40: "...to be skeptical of the resultant text of the New Testament books is to allow all of classical antiquity slip into obscurity, for no documents of the ancient period are as well attested bibliographically as the New Testament."

2. Historical and geographical evidence:

a. McDowell quotes William F. Albright, p. 65, "There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of Old Testament tradition." Furthermore, Albright says, "The excessive scepticism shown toward the Bible by important historical schools of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, certain phases of which still appear periodically, has been progressively discredited. Discovery after discovery has established the accuracy of innumerable details, and has brought increased recognition to the value of the Bible as a source history."

b. One criticism of the Bible was that Moses could not have written the first five books of the Bible because writing had not been developed by his time. In 1902 the "Code of Hammurabi" was found disproving this charge. The "Code of Hammurabi" was found inscribed on an eight foot high stone containing some 247 laws. The inscription was dated at about 600 years before the time of the Exodus.

c. Another criticism of the historicity of the Bible was that the Hittites, mentioned about 40 times in the Old Testament, were nowhere to be found in the historical record outside the Bible. Reference to them has since been found in the archives of the 19th Dynasty of Egypt. Furthermore, in 1906 at Bogazkoy the archives of the Hittites themselves were found. The evidence not only revealed the existence and the location of the Hittite people from about the 19th century B. C., but revealed also written languages, their own and that of surrounding people, in the form of treaties between the Hittites and their neighbors, further confirming the existence of written languages long before the time of Moses. Today, the Hittite people, whom the great Bible scholar/critics of the past proclaimed did not exist, are well documented (among other sources see Microsoft Encarta 96 Encyclopedia).

3. Conclusion: Archaeology, a near neighbor and respected associate of science, has supported repeatedly the accuracy of the Bible. While this does not prove the Bible is the complete revelation of God, it does prove that **1)** we have an accurate account of what was written in the first century and **2)** the Bible is accurate where it crosses paths with secular history. Maybe more importantly it quells some of the critics who

have sought futilely to discredit the Bible's authenticity by finding errors in its text. McDowell quotes Nelson Glueck, p. 65:

"It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a biblical reference... Glueck further observed "...the almost incredibly accurate historical memory of the Bible, and particularly so when it is fortified by archaeological fact."

He also cites Professor H. H. Rowley, p. 65:

"... it is not because scholars of today begin with more conservative presuppositions than their predecessors that they have a much greater respect for the Patriarchal stories than was formerly common, but because the evidence warrants it."

Archaeology honestly pursued and without bias is a friend of the Bible.

C. Indestructibility of the Bible is Testimony of its Authenticity: From its inception to the present day, the Bible has been attacked by Jewish religious leaders, emperors, kings, false religions, educators, and philosophers. Throughout the ages the Bible has been criticized, corrupted, hated, banned, burned, ridiculed, and, maybe worst of all, simply ignored. The Bible has received greater vilification and hostility over the centuries than any other book, and yet it survives today. Not only does the Bible survive, but it is perennially the world's best selling book. It is so often at the top of the best seller list, and by such a large margin, that the publishing industry no longer lists it among the competitors. (A liberal, anti-God bias within the publishing industry may also account for the absence of the Bible from that list.) This does not prove that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, but it certainly provides one more reason to come to that conclusion. The Bible's durability in the face of massive hostility over many centuries does not prove authenticity, but it adds yet another piece of evidence to the overwhelming prima facie case for it. This is what Scripture would lead us to expect. Matthew records in chapter 13 and Luke in chapter 8 what we refer to as the Parable of the Sower. In this parable the "seed" is identified as the Word of God. Peter writes of this "seed" in his first letter:

"... having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23).

We would expect from the Bible's own assertion that, being incorruptible and eternal, the Bible would survive any abuse brought against it.

Consider some of the attacks that the Bible has survived:

1. Neglect of the Word of God: To a measurable degree the Old Testament is a history of neglect regarding the Word of God. 2 Kings 22 records the ascendancy to the throne by Josiah and chronicles the restoration and repair of the temple, the first task that he undertook. As a result of this work, the high priest, Hilkiah, finds the

Book of the Law and brings it to Josiah, who immediately directs that the words of the Law be implemented once again in Judah. For the Book of the Law to be found, it had to be lost. We do not know how long it had been lost, but during that time the nation could not have been following the will of God. Nevertheless, the Word of the Lord was not lost forever, but was found and restored.

2. Old Testament Persecutions: In 175 B. C. Antiochus IV, also called Antiochus Epiphanes, rose to power in Syria, which also ruled over Palestine. He was the sixth Seleucid king descended from Seleucus I, a general under Alexander the Great. Alexander, by one report, divided his kingdom among "the strongest" of his generals, a tactic not conducive to peace and rapport among the factions. The Seleucids promoted Greek culture throughout the region they ruled, but adopted eastern practices of rule, one of which was to regard the king as god. Antiochus Epiphanes took this concept to the extreme and around 165 B. C. began a campaign to eradicate any opposing religions under threat of death. Concerning the Jews and the Book of the Law, 1 Maccabees 1:56-58 records:

"The books of the law which they found they tore to pieces and burned with fire. Where the book of the covenant was found in the possession of any one, or if any one adhered to the law, the decree of the king condemned him to death. They kept using violence against Israel, against those found month after month in the cities."

Despite this kind of aggression against the Word of God, we have the Old Testament in tact today.

3. Persecution of Christianity at its Inception: Stephen, the first Christian martyr, is believed to have been killed circa A.D. 36, only a couple of years after the death and resurrection of our Lord. Acts 7: 54-60 records his death and Acts 8:1 reveals that a persecution arose in Judea:

"At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles."

Christianity suffered persecution before the first pages of the New Testament were written. Still, the Bible was compiled and survives to the present day.

4. Incompatibility of Christianity with Roman Political Structure: Greek culture and language combined with the political stability, relatively speaking, of the Roman empire was an advantage to the spread of Christianity. But, the perception of the Roman emperors as gods often worked to great disadvantage. Christianity and the Bible suffered severely at the hands of the Roman emperors because of the conflict between their perception of themselves and the true God of Heaven as worthy of worship. Christians endured persecutions over a period of two and a half centuries before Constantine adopted Christianity as the official religion of the Roman empire.

Some of those emperors that persecuted Christians were:

- a. Claudius (A.D. 41-54) banished Christians from Rome in the early 50's.
- b. Nero (A.D. 54-68) blamed the great fire in Rome in A. D. 64 upon Christians, resulting in a great persecution.
- c. Trajan (A.D. 98-117).
- d. Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180) ruthlessly persecuted Christians, believing them to be a threat to the imperial system.
- e. Diocletian (A.D. 284-305) began a purge which was unparalleled before his time. Meeting places were destroyed, copies of the Bible were confiscated and burned, those who owned them lost their liberties under the Roman law, others were executed, some drowned in blood while others were consumed with fire, and church leaders were put to death. He considered his drive to exterminate Christianity so successful that he erected a column over a burned Bible with these triumphant words: "The Name Of Christian Is Extinguished." Diocletian died in 305 and by 312, under the rule of Constantine, Christianity was the official religion of the empire (see Criswell).

"All flesh is grass, but the Word of the Lord stands forever" (1 Peter 1:24)!

5. The Bible and Opposing Religions: Whenever one religion comes into conflict with another religion, hostility from the adherents of one upon the adherents of the other is possible. This has been the history of Christianity as it has spread into all parts of the world. Of all of Christianity's opponents none has been more hostile than Islam, also known as Mohammedanism. Since the seventh century A.D., Islam has not only been in conflict with Christianity, it has been violently and actively opposed to it. Often called "The religion of the sword," Islam swept across North Africa, Spain, and far into France in the early Middle Ages. Those who were conquered were given two choices, the Koran or the sword. While Christianity survived that initial onslaught, the conflict continues today. The September 11, 2001, terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Washington is closely connected to some of the most radical and fiercest elements of the Islamic religion. If Islam were somehow to become the dominant religion in the country or in the world, there would be no ecumenism and no quarter for any opposition.

6. The Bible's "Christian" Enemies: When Christianity became the official state religion of the Roman Empire, the foundation was laid for a strong central, ecclesiastical church leadership to develop. The Roman Catholic church with its priestly hierarchy emerged as the dominant influence in the spread and development of Christianity. Contrary to New Testament doctrine, religious power became centralized in Rome under one bishop, the bishop of Rome, who became known as the Pope. This organization, not found in the Bible, encompassed great power and

influence in whomever was the head of that organization and became a great source of temptation for corrupt and power hungry men. As a result men without serious religious conviction or Bible knowledge aspired for the leadership of the Roman Catholic church. It may be a question of some dispute whether these men were simply ignorant of the Bible or purposefully ignored it, but they did not administer to Christians in the manner prescribed in the Bible. Rather, they found it in their best interest to keep the Bible from the people. The Bible was kept in the original Greek or translated into Latin, languages reserved for the educated, which most often were members of the clergy. The common people could not read the Bible for themselves and were at the mercy of their religious leaders, the clergy, to tell them what their response to God should be. This system, while not destroying the Bible as a source document, destroyed its influence by withholding it from its adherents. The Bible in effect became a dead icon rather than the Living Word.

Consider some examples of what these “Christian” leaders did to protect the people from the Word of God (source: Waymon Miller, Evidences For The Bible):

a. Pope Innocent III, in 1199, had the French Bibles burned and forbade the people to have more.

b. Pope Gregory IX, in 1234, ordered the people of Spain to bring in their Bibles so they might be burned.

c. In 1378 John Wycliff and some Oxford associates undertook the translation of the Bible into English. In 1379 he openly denied the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation. In 1383 the Synod of Oxford condemned him for heresy, but he died a natural death before any action could be taken against him. In 1428, some 44 years after his death, the council of Constance decreed that his body should be burned and that his ashes should be thrown into the river. When anyone was found with a copy of the Scriptures translated by John Wycliffe into English, the copy of the Bible was tied around his neck and he was burned at the stake.

d. William Tyndale was the first man to print the entire New Testament in English. For his action he was arrested by the “Church” for his crime and sentenced to death in 1536. He was first strangled, then burned at the stake.

e. In Steiermark, Germany, on August 8, 1600, 10,000 Bibles were confiscated and burned.

f. In 1637 in Bohemia the Jesuits boasted of burning 60,000 Bibles in a single year.

g. In 1713 Pope Clement II condemned Bible reading on the part of church members.

h. In 1816 Pope Pius VII called the Bible societies a pest.

i. As recently as May 6, 1844, Pope Gregory XVI said those favoring Bible societies

distributing Bibles to the masses were “guilty of the greatest crime against God and the church.”

7. The Bible and Modern Philosophy:

a. Modernism: Many philosophies and doctrines have contributed to modernism. Since around the eighteenth century, philosophers have attempted to explain all things in strictly natural terms. The advances of science have given great credibility to its pronouncements, even in metaphysical areas. In many circles the Doctrine of Organic Evolution was accepted without critical consideration because it provided a model that advanced a purely naturalistic concept of the universe. Naturalism, Scientism, and Organic Evolution have all combined to produce the foundation for Humanism, the philosophy of the Modernist.

Consider the attitude of such people toward the Bible ... and the results (see Miller):

* Voltaire, born Francois Marie Arouet (1694-1776), was one of the early leaders of this movement. He boasted that it took twelve ignorant fishermen to establish Christianity, and he would show how one Frenchman could destroy it. He said, “In less than a hundred years the Bible will be discarded and Christianity swept from the earth.” He further boasted, “One hundred years from my day there will not be a Bible in the earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquated curiosity-seeker.” Twenty-five years after Voltaire’s death, his house was purchased by the Geneva Bible Society, along with his old printing press. His press was used to print Bibles and his house was used as a storehouse for the distribution of them.

* David Hume (1711-1776), English philosopher who greatly influenced the development of skepticism, the idea that true knowledge is not attainable, and empiricism, that truth is based upon experience as opposed to reason, said, “I see the twilight of Christianity.” someone wrote later, “When Hume said, ‘I see the twilight of Christianity,’ he was confused. He could not tell sunrise from sunset.”

b. Post-Modernism: The present age has its own philosophical opponent to Biblical authority, Post-Modernism. This philosophy, influenced by Transcendentalism, Existentialism, Naturalism and the Doctrine of Organic Evolution, regards man as the center of the universe, evolving into an ever higher animal, leading to the idea that all truth is relative to the individual. With such a mindset there is little regard for anything that comes out of the past, regardless of any claims to divine origin. If man is a perpetually evolving animal, the present age represents the highest development of thought. The past has nothing to offer that would be of interest to the present age. The Bible is considered as a relic of the past and, if it could in some way be construed to be from God, it would be understood differently by men of today with their more highly developed minds than it would have been by our inferior predecessors. This philosophy left unchecked and unchallenged would disperse Christianity into as many different directions as there were people who wished to espouse their own peculiar brand of faith. Out of this thinking we hear such phrases as “unity in diversity” and

"all opinions must be regarded as equally valid." Rather than striving for unity out of diversity, everyone will feel comfortable with his own brand of religion. But, this philosophy will fail to destroy the Bible along with all the others. As Gamaliel, the Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, said of Peter and the other apostles in Jerusalem during the infancy of the church, "... if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it ..." (Acts 5:38-39). So it will be with Post-Modernism. Being a product of man it will come to nothing.

"Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing?... He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall hold them in derision" (Psalm 2:1; 4).

D. Fulfillment of Prophecy is Testimony of the Bible's Authenticity: Possibly the most powerful testimony to Christian faith is the resurrection. The reality of the resurrection is so important that the apostle Paul states that our faith would be vain without it. He writes:

"But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty ... For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (1 Corinthians 15:13-17)!

The importance of biblical authority becomes essential because it is the source of the resurrection account. Without the testimony of the Scriptures there would be no evidence of the life, death, resurrection, identity, or purpose of Jesus Christ.

Next to the testimony of the resurrection, the most powerful evidence for the reality of Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy about Him in the Scriptures and about other events that confirm the authenticity of the Bible. McDowell writes:

"The apostles throughout the New Testament appealed to two areas of the life of Jesus of Nazareth to establish His Messiahship. One was the resurrection and the other was fulfilled messianic prophecy. The Old Testament, written over a 1,000-year period, contains several hundred references to the coming Messiah. All of these were fulfilled in Jesus Christ, and they establish a solid confirmation of His credentials as the Messiah."

No one recognized the importance and impact of Old Testament testimony and fulfilled prophecy more than Jesus Himself. He frequently spoke, "It is written," then quoted from the Old Testament. Furthermore, Jesus spoke of words of the Old Testament being fulfilled in Himself. Few moments in all of biblical history could have been more epiphanic than the one recorded in Luke 4:18-21 where Jesus quotes the messianic passage found in Isaiah 49:8-9. In verse 21 He states in direct and unembellished language, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." Prophecy powerfully affirms the authenticity of the Bible!

Let us take note of only some of the testimony of prophecy and fulfillment found in

the Scriptures:

1. a few of Jesus' remarks concerning fulfillment:

- a. Luke 24:27 - "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."
- b. John 5:39 - "You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me."
- c. Matthew 21:42 - Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures, 'The Stone which the builders rejected, has become the chief cornerstone...?'"
- d. See also Matthew 5:17; 11: 10; 13: 14; Luke 24:44; et al.

2. New Testament writers testify to prophecies fulfilled in Jesus:

- a. Acts 3:18 - "But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled." (spoken by Peter as recorded by Luke)
- b. Acts 17:2-3 - "Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, 'This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.'" (spoken by Paul as recorded by Luke)
- c. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 - "For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures..." (recorded by Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth)
- d. Other references: Acts 10:43; Acts 13:29; Romans 1:2; 1 Peter 2:5-6.

3. Examples of prophecies fulfilled in Jesus: (prophecy --> fulfillment)

- a. Born of woman: Genesis 3:15 --> Matthew 1:20; Galatians 4:4
- b. Born of a virgin: Isaiah 7:14 --> Matthew 1:18, 24-25; Luke 1:26-35.
- c. Son of God: II Samuel 7:12-16; I Chronicles 17:11-14; Psalm 2:7 --> Matthew 3:17; Matthew 16:16; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; 22:70; John 1:34, 49; Acts 13:30-33.
- d. Seed of Abraham: Genesis 12:2-3; Genesis 22:18 --> Matthew 1:1; Galatians 3:16.
- e. Tribe of Judah: Genesis 49:10; Micah 5:2 --> Matthew 1:2; Luke 3:23, 33; Hebrews 7:14.

f. Family of Jesse: Isaiah 11:1, 10 --> Matthew 1:6; Luke 3:23, 32.

g. House of David: II Samuel 7:12-16; Psalm 132:11; Jeremiah 23:5 --> Matthew 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; Luke 3:23, 3; et al.

h. Born at Bethlehem: Micah 5:2 --> Matthew 2:1, 4-8; Luke 2:4-7; John 7:42.

i. Shall be called Immanuel: Isaiah 7:14 --> Matthew 1:23.

j. The Christ would be crucified: Psalm 22:16 --> Luke 23:33; John 19:18; 20:25.

k. et al

4. McDowell in Evidence That Demands A Verdict identifies sixty-one (61) Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah that were all fulfilled in Jesus Christ:

a. Concerning the probability that only eight (8) prophecies would be fulfilled in one man, McDowell gives the calculation of Peter Stoner in Science Speaks: 1 chance in 1017 or 1 chance in 100,000,000,000,000,000. 1017 (10 to the 17th power) silver dollars would cover the whole state of Texas to a depth of two feet.

b. Concerning the probability that 48 of the prophecies would be fulfilled in one man was computed by Stoner as 1 chance in 10157 (10 to the 157th power) or 1 chance in 1 followed by 157 zeroes. The odds against these 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one man defy comprehension. For comparison it would take 1015 (10 to the 15th power) electrons laid in a row to make up a linear inch. A cubic inch of electrons would total 1015 x 1015 x 1015 electrons = 1045 electrons, a number not yet approaching the 10157 number. If one began counting the electrons in the cubic inch at the rate of 250 per minute it would take 6.9 x 1021 years to accomplish the feat.

c. Try to imagine the probability of selecting the one chance that we are seeking in the 10157 (10 to the 157th power) options. In a mathematical sense it is possible, but in a practical sense it is impossible! No one in a rational state of mind could imagine that one man could fulfill sixty-one prophecies by blind chance. Only by Divine intervention could this occur.

5. Biblical prophecies fulfilled in history: The value of fulfilled historical prophecies is well stated by McDowell when he writes that they "illustrate the power of God through the fulfillments of seemingly impossible predictions directly grounded in the course of human events." The fulfillment of historical prophecies adds but another voice to the plethora of voices that testify to the authenticity of the Scriptures. Consider this one example:

a. Chapter twenty-six of the Book of Ezekiel records one of the most detailed prophecies in the Bible. This chapter records the following specific pronouncements

against the city of Tyre, a powerful Phoenician trading center for centuries on the eastern Mediterranean coast:

- * 26: 3 - God would send many nations against Tyre.
- * 26: 4, 14 - Tyre would literally be flattened ("make her like the top of a rock").
- * 26: 4 - Tyre would become a place "for spreading nets in the midst of the sea."
- * 26: 7- 8 - Nebuchadnezzar would destroy the mainland city of Tyre.
- * 26: 12 - The stones, timber, and soil of the city would be laid "in the midst of the sea."
- * 26: 14 - The city would "never be rebuilt."
- * 26: 21 - The city "will be no more ... you will never be found again, says the Lord."

The Fulfillment:

* Within three years of the prophecy, Nebuchadnezzar laid siege to Tyre, ultimately destroying the mainland city in 538 B. C. Many of the inhabitants escaped to an island about a half mile offshore. There they constructed a fortress that secured Tyre for about another two centuries. The city was never rebuilt on the mainland.

* In 333 B. C. Alexander the Great began his conquest of the Persian Empire. In 332 B. C. he laid siege to the city of Tyre, now positioned on that offshore island. After seven months the island city fell. To accomplish this task Alexander's men gathered the refuse of stones, timbers, and soil from the old city to build a causeway to the island. Thus, the prophecy was fulfilled that many nations would come against Tyre, the materials of the city would be "cast into the midst of the sea" and the city's site would be made flat "like the top of a rock."

* There is, to this day, no city on the site of ancient Tyre. There is nothing left of Tyre but a small fishing village, a place "for spreading nets in the midst of the sea."

* It is now over 2,300 years later and Tyre has yet to be reestablished to even a shadow of what it once was. Search as you might, you cannot find but a few stones remaining of the great city that once stood on that site.

b. Probability that one could accidentally predict these events to be fulfilled: Again McDowell quotes Stoner from *Science Speaks: An Evaluation of Certain Christian Evidences*, "If Ezekiel ... had made these seven predictions in human wisdom,...there would have been only one chance in 75,000,000 of their all coming true."

c. For a detailed account of this prophecy and many more see Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, pp. 267-323.

V. Conclusion: Much of American Christian religion at the beginning of this century is, much to our surprise and concern, not Bible based at all, but founded upon and sustained by personal experiences and feelings. In the minds of many, it is more appropriate to doubt a verse of Scripture than it is to question the validity of another

person's experience. Furthermore, with the advance of "political correctness" and "multiculturalism," it is considered socially inappropriate to proclaim publicly ones own beliefs, much more so to suggest that another's may be wrong.

The Word of God is not "politically correct," it is not multicultural," it is not optional. It is counter-culture, cross-culture, and universal. The Hebrew writer states, "The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). This "living" quality makes the Word of God relevant to every generation, past, present, and future. The fact that it is active implies that it is powerful, as attested by the claim of even dividing "soul and spirit" and judging the "thoughts and intentions of the heart." Many souls can be reached if we can get our neighbors and friends, our family members and associates, the people with whom we work, and even casual acquaintances to accept the Bible as God's complete revelation to man. But without the conviction that the Bible is authentic and, therefore, authoritative, there is little chance that the Word of God will reach many hearts. The task of evangelism, the primary task of the church, the hope of every Christian, should be to get the gospel of Jesus Christ into the heads and hearts of everyone that we can, for:

"... it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'The just shall live by faith'" (Romans 1: 16-17).

VI. Bibliography: A short bibliography is supplied for those who would like to have more information than has been provided in this paper:

1. Josh McDowell, Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Vol. 1 (San Bernardino, Calif.: Here's Life Publishers, Inc., 1986).
2. Josh McDowell & Bill Wilson, He Walked Among Us, (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1988).
3. Neale Pryor, You Can Trust Your Bible, (Abilene, Tex.: Quality Publications, 1980).
4. Dr. W. A. Criswell, The Bible For Today's World, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1965).
5. Waymon Miller, Evidences For The Bible, (Miller Publications).

(Note: If you were to seek only one resource we recommend Evidence That Demands a Verdict by Josh McDowell.)

Submitted by Ron Stullenbarger and Jim Hyest
By approval of the Elders

As in any significant effort many people are required to bring a work to a successful conclusion. We would like to thank Jerry Joseph, Jeff Kent, and David Wright for reading the first draft and offering their comments and encouragement. We also thank Elizabeth Wright for proofreading the first draft and Jenny Hyst for her editorial suggestions. A special thank you is given to Janet Lemasters who worked diligently to format the text in its present finished form in spite of the resistance encountered from Microsoft Publisher. And, finally, a thank you goes to our elders at 1310 National Road for approving this booklet for printing and distribution, and for providing the funds to underwrite the project.

Once again we see the principle at work implied in 1 Corinthians 3: 6 where Paul planted and Apollos watered. Now we await for God to give the increase.