

THE BIBLE— MYTH OR AUTHORITY?

by Herman L. Hoeh

WHAT is the Bible? Does it have a purpose? Can it be proved that the Bible is an inspired revelation from God for man?

How can you be sure? And how can you know that if there be an original inspired revelation, given directly by God to His prophets and apostles, it has been accurately preserved?

Have atheists or agnostics ever *really* proved that the Bible is *not* the Word of a Living God—that it is myth?

Why Theologians Are Angry With the Bible

The world's foremost theologians assume—without proof—that the Bible has a natural origin in human traditions! They subtly imply it is without genuine authority.

The Bible is, according to today's philosophy, the inspiring record of *man's* search for a concept of God—not the *inspired* record of God's revelation to man of essential knowledge man needs to know but would not otherwise be able to obtain!

What made them believe such an idea? Are they without proof of the inspiration of Scripture? Surely, if there were proof for the inspiration of the Bible, these learned men would not have overlooked it—would they? . . . or did they face the evidence and reject it?

To acknowledge the authority of the Bible would mean preaching what it says! It would require one to reject the false traditions inherited from the pagans. It would mean letting the Bible correct one where he or she is wrong. That goes against human nature!

What were the learned theologians to do to justify themselves? They simply looked the other way when the proof, the evidence appeared! They then claimed the Scriptures were with-

out authority since, as they said, they were unable to find any genuine evidence of their inspiration!

Is it any wonder why so many are deceived? So let's now understand what the Bible really is.

WHAT the Bible Really Is

The Bible is the written revelation of the Creator God for mankind. It contains absolutely vital knowledge that everyone needs to understand—but which would be inaccessible by any natural means. In the Bible, God speaks with authority to us through its writers. The Bible, then, possesses supreme authority over our lives, since it comes from our own Supreme Creator. The Bible repeats hundreds of times: "Thus saith the Lord" In Scripture, God speaks in the first person—"I"—and challenges us to test Him to prove whether He speaks the truth (Isa. 44:6-9).

Without the Bible we can never understand the lessons of the past, the meaning of the present, and the goals of the future!

Scripture, when rightly understood, gives a rational meaning for man's being here and the causes of our world's ills. It explains exactly why this world has wars, sicknesses and suffering. These are the penalties of a wrong way of life. There are hundreds of religious, political and economic "cures" in the world, but none of them reaches the cause of earth's problems. Only God's mind is great enough to know the true answers. No book but His Bible can explain the laws that eternally regulate human life and human affairs—laws which, when violated, bring the penalties of sickness, war and death.

Only the Bible is able to point the way out of impending chaos!

Yet men reject its solutions as out-of-date in this space age. Its truth they

do not want to grasp. That's why "the Lord has a controversy with the nations" (Jer. 25:31). Ever since the beginning of human life, God has had a controversy with humanity. Human beings by nature refuse to follow His way of life. Humans think their ways are better. Man assumes that he knows more than God. Yes, "there is a way that seems right to a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). Humanity avoids acknowledging God as Supreme Ruler. They hide their eyes from plain evidence, and label Scripture falsely as myth and tradition.

The PROOFS

Everyone today demands proof! People have a chip on their shoulders, so to speak. They want someone to prove whether the Bible is true. Christ said this challenging attitude would reach its climax in these last days of human civilization—just before man with his scientific ingenuity blasts all human life out of existence (Luke 18:8). Of course it is right that we should prove it! And there is proof—proof of the most amazing kind—proof that would astound the public if the theologians were to publicly confess it! But the world is wilfully ignorant of it!

Believe it or not, the world already knows of the proof but, having been deceived, it is unwilling to accept it. It has seen the proof; it has felt it; it has dug it up; it has read it; it has even published it! But humanity, deceived by superstition and vain religious traditions, has rejected it because it does not want to believe and surrender its will to the Bible.

Only the fool would reject the evidence of creation and prophecy. But sadly, the world is filled with fools! It has rejected both.

The mass of evidence is overwhelm-

ing. It is so great that this entire issue of *The PLAIN TRUTH* could not begin to contain it all. This mass of evidence has created a paradox. Just as the world publishes and sells the Bible, but does not believe it, so it discovers, publishes and sells the evidences of Biblical inspiration, but it does not believe it.

The world has not only turned the truth upside down, but it has also turned the proof upside down—making right seem wrong and true proof seem disproof.

These proofs confound the atheist. These proofs demonstrate once and for all time that the Biblical record is inspired and true! They are made plain in our free, illustrated booklets *The PROOF of the Bible, Does God Exist?* and in the Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course.

Is God Able to Preserve His Book?

Critics today challenge the accuracy of copies of the Bible in their original Hebrew and Greek languages. Can we be sure that the Bible has not been corrupted? How can we know that it still is the revelation of God to man? Has it been so changed and corrupted by myth since the original writing as to be highly doubtful, if not altogether altered?

Here are the facts. For years the critics claimed the Hebrew Bible was of no authority. "A late and altered form of earlier Hebrew writings," they claimed!

Then came the year 1947.

In the summer of '47 a sheer coincidence led to the discovery of the oldest manuscripts of the Bible so far known. Among a collection of literary works found in a cave in Wadi Qumran on the north side of the Dead Sea, a 23-foot leather scroll was found to contain the complete text of the book of Isaiah in Hebrew! Expert examination of the document revealed beyond doubt that this Isaiah text dated from about 100 B.C.

This copy of Isaiah, now about 2000 years old, is unique proof of the reliability of the text of the Holy Scriptures that have been handed down to us. The text in all fundamentals agrees with what we have in our present-day

Bibles! The only differences are minor spelling changes and misplaced words, changes that represent the carelessness of unofficial sectarian scribes who copied that text of the book of Isaiah.

In other words, the present Masoretic Hebrew text, which is a continuation of the official Old Testament Hebrew, is far superior in preservation to the unofficial copy of Isaiah made 2000 years ago. Furthermore, the ancient scroll of Isaiah, just like the printed copies of Isaiah in any modern-day Bible, whether Hebrew, Greek, English or German, has the same 66 chapters of our present-day text.

Until this find, the oldest and fullest Manuscript in Hebrew was the Codex Petropolitanus, dating from about 916 A.D. This proves how accurate the Jews have been in copying, generation after generation, the books of the Old Testament. How can anyone deny that God is giving divine protection to the Book which contains His commands and revelations to man!

Between 1949 and 1951 additional manuscripts were located in other caves near the Dead Sea. In these scrolls were 19 books of the Old Testament—all telling the same story as the Isaiah Manuscript!

True, minor, and on occasion significant variations occur. But remember, the Dead Sea Scrolls were not copied by the official scribes of the Jewish community. Jesus never recognized the Dead Sea sects as having any authority over the true Hebrew Text, commonly called the Masoretic Hebrew text.

The Dead Sea Scrolls plainly show the satanic influence of Samaritan conspirators. Between the time of Alexander the Great and the second century B.C. the Samaritans tried their best to infiltrate the Jewish community and alter the inspired scriptures. They failed. But they did succeed in foisting on the world a corrupt translation of the Hebrew into Greek. That translation is called the Septuagint, or Seventy. It was translated by seventy scholars who used texts from Samaritan Palestine. The Jews steadfastly refused to admit the Septuagint into the Synagogue. The great majority of Old Testament quotations found in the New Testament are not taken from the Septuagint, but from

other translations commonly circulated in the Jewish world of the first century A.D. The minor variations that do occur are added proof that the standard Hebrew Masoretic text is the official Old Testament text God has preserved. The variations in the Dead Sea Scrolls show these manuscripts were influenced by the Samaritans' altered text.

Jews Preserved Old Testament

Through whom has God preserved His authoritative written Word accurately?

Jesus said: "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18).

Has this happened? Was Jesus right? Or has the Law—the Old Testament—been hopelessly lost and corrupted?

Luke quotes Jesus as saying: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than one tittle of the law to fail" (Luke 16:17). Modern critics assume Jesus was wrong. They think the Old Testament has not been accurately preserved. But they are wrong!

Jesus also announced: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (See Matthew 24:35, Mark 13:31 and Luke 21:33.)

Jesus' Words—the very words recorded by the apostles in the New Testament—shall not pass away!

Of course the modern critics prefer to quote Jesus as saying: "Heaven and earth cannot pass away, but my words shall pass away!" But these critics are wrong! Jesus is right. His words have not passed away. The critics have merely been unwilling to look for His Words where He said they could be found! They have, instead, looked elsewhere so that they would not find Jesus' Words.

Notice where we ought to look for the authoritative text of the Bible. Read it from the Revised Standard Version which the modern critics have themselves translated: "Then what advantage has the Jew?"

Yes, what special duty did God give to the Jew? Notice:

"Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews are entrusted with the oracles of God. What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the

faithfulness of God? By no means! Let God be true though every man be false, as it is written, 'That Thou mayest be justified in Thy words . . .'" (Romans 3:1-4).

To whom were the oracles of God, the written record of God's revelation delivered through Moses and the prophets—the Old Testament—committed? To the Jews!

The Jews have preserved the Old Testament. But what if the Jews did not believe and did not practice the things written in the law, the prophets and the psalms? What if the Jews became divided into Orthodox and other sects? Does their rejection of some of the truth nullify the faithfulness of the written Word of God which they are required to preserve from generation to generation?

"God forbid," declared the King James Version. "By no means," reiterates the Revised Standard Version.

So the Jews—by the very admission of these critics—have preserved the Old Testament faithfully!

Now consider the New Testament. It was offered first to the Jews. But the Jews rejected the New Testament—refused even to accept its Author. What did God, in His wise foreknowledge, do? He revealed His Word to the Gentiles and especially to the Greeks for a very great purpose.

Greeks Preserve New Testament

Notice Paul's statement. The Jews originally had the advantage over the Greeks because the Jews received the oracles of God (Romans 3:1-4). Now, however, declares Paul, "there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him" (Rom. 10:12). No difference? Why?

Continuing with verses 14 and 15: "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? . . ."

The Greeks, too, received "the word of God." God sent to them a special apostle—Paul. Though he spoke to Gentiles in general wherever he went,

Paul went almost exclusively to Greeks. He spoke to others only as they were found in the Greek-speaking world. Paul wrote to Greek-speaking churches, not to Ethiopian-, Chinese-, German- or Persian-speaking churches. There was a very special reason.

Let us read further—Romans 10:19-20: "But I say, 'Did not Israel know?' [That is, did not Israel recognize God's message? But they refused it and were in part blinded spiritually.] First Moses saith, 'I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation [the Greeks were indeed a foolish nation, filled with vanity of mind] I will anger you.' But Esaias is very bold, and saith, 'I was found of them that sought me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me.'"

Notice that Paul applied these prophecies to his day—the New Testament period.

When the Jews rejected the message of Jesus Christ, God raised up the apostle Paul to go to the Greek-speaking world. The Greeks would hear! They did hear! They received the oracles of Jesus Christ—the New Testament! And they have preserved it! Jesus declared: "My word shall not pass away"—and it has not passed away. The Greeks alone of all peoples copied, generation after generation, the New Testament in the very language God inspired it to be written! No other people did it! The Samaritans corrupted it, the Latins and Egyptians translated and often corrupted it. Only the Greeks have accurately copied it in its original language.

Today about 4500 examined Greek manuscripts "all confirm the integrity and purity of the New Testament text," wrote Cobern in *The New Archeological Discoveries*. In 1935 a fragment of John's Gospel in Greek, dating from the time of Emperor Trajan, 98-117 A.D., was discovered in Egypt. The fragment was part of a codex or book, indicating that the entire New Testament IN PROPER ORDER was circulating within a score of years following the death of the last apostle. This fragment confirms our present text. All these fragments and texts witness to the accuracy with which the New Testament

has been preserved through fire and sword.

But what about minor variations in the Greek New Testament?

Bible a LIVING Book!

The answer is that Scripture is a living book, using living languages. In English, for example, if we are to understand the Bible, we need new wordings from time to time as the old wording becomes difficult to understand. Most of our readers would be unable to read the translations into English made 100 years before the King James Version. We have these versions in the libraries of the Ambassador Colleges. It would be useless to quote from them in *The PLAIN TRUTH*—they are too difficult to understand. Old English almost seems to be a foreign language to those of us who live today.

In the same way slight changes were necessitated over the centuries in the Hebrew and Greek due to the gradual changes in wording and expression in those two divinely chosen languages. In order for His Word to be understandable in public reading, God permitted minor scribal variations in spelling and word order for clarity. That is why no two hand-copied codices or complete manuscripts of either Old or New Testament agree 100 percent in every detail. God has purposed it! He intended His Word, even in the original languages, to be living, active, intelligent channels through which His Will might be expressed.

These minor changes—contrary to the usual opinion—prove rather than disprove the inspiration of Scripture. Inspiration is not of any value whatsoever in a dead, unintelligible language! The Greeks have not been left to decide for themselves whether or not they want to preserve it. God has made them preserve His word correctly.

I have before me, as I write, the Greek New Testament in the first printed edition published in Constantinople in 1912. It is the Greeks' official authorized printed text of the Greek New Testament. When the Greeks published this edition they checked their authoritative manuscripts. The

Greek religious authorities are held responsible by God for it. In the reproduction of this first edition (in Constantinople) before me, a typographical error occurred. Mark 7:16 was, by accident, left out of the printed text! So, in later production, when the printing of the new edition came out, in all faithfulness to the original printed edition the Greeks did not insert this accidentally missing verse (Mark 7:16) in the text, but made a note in the text and put the verse at the foot of the page for all to read. In other words, once an officially approved printed edition was made, there were to be no additions or deletions in the printed edition. And if an error, due to human oversight, later is found, it was required to be printed below. Every Greek must thereafter, when reading, insert the accidentally missing verse placed at the bottom of the page!

This is fundamentally the same way the Jews preserved the Old Testament! When the Jews had officially approved a manuscript for synagogue use, if, at a later time, they found a scribal error which they had not noticed, they left the text just as it was—with the scribal error; but in the margin of this officially approved text, they inserted the correct reading and every man who read in the synagogue had to read what the margin had! When they recopied that manuscript, they recopied the error in the text and the true reading in the margin! That is how they have always preserved the Bible absolutely accurately! God has not left it to the individual to decide these matters.

Why Critics Reject Greeks' Text

Now see what has happened. Modern critics refuse to accept the valid manuscripts which the Greeks have preserved! They have done the same with the true text of the Hebrew Old Testament! Over 95 percent of all New Testament manuscripts have been preserved by the Greeks. These were the manuscripts basically used in the King James Version. The modern critics in their own wisdom turn away from these in their Revised Standard Version to the corrupted 5 percent of Greek copies found in Egypt and the Latin

world. These spurious manuscripts originated under Samaritan, Egyptian and Roman influence at the hands of the conspirators who secretly followed Simon Magus (see Acts 8). They wanted to decide for themselves how the Bible should read. They did not want to come under the authority of the Bible.

The critics today claim in their pompous wisdom that out of these contradictory and corrupted manuscripts—no two of which agree closely on many important verses—they can derive a New Testament text! All they have done is discover how the Greek New Testament had been corrupted in Egypt and Rome by the conspirators out of Samaria who followed Simon Magus.

It is time we have our eyes opened to what happened in the "Lost Century" of Church history—between A.D. 70-170.

The modern critics are merely following in the footsteps of the early conspirators, like the "Church Father" Origen, who tried to "correct" the New Testament in their own "wisdom."

Text of Protestant Reformers

For centuries, during the Middle Ages, the only Bible accessible to Western Europe was the Latin Vulgate Bible. It was the work of the scholar Jerome, who prepared it from many old Latin translations—which differed among themselves. This Bible is the progeny of Rome.

Rome has not preserved the New Testament in the original inspired Greek. Italy is not the homeland of the inspired Greek New Testament.

Jerome attested to the corruption of the Latin translations of his day.

"If we are to glean the truth," said Jerome, "from a comparison of many, why not go back to the original Greek and correct the mistakes introduced by inaccurate translators, and the blundering alterations of confident but ignorant critics, . . . all that has been inserted or changed by copyists" in the Latin (Jerome, *Vulgate Preface*, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 6).

There you have it!

For nearly 14 centuries the Latin Vulgate translation of the Bible dominated the Western World. Then, in 1453 the Turks conquered Constanti-

nople, the capital of the Greek world. Many Greek scholars fled west. They brought their manuscripts with them. Soon Erasmus and Ximenes, Stephen and Elzvir and Beza published texts of the New Testament in Greek. In a few instances these Greek New Testament texts contained additions from the Latin Vulgate which these scholars translated into Greek. A striking example is I John 5:7 which occurs in no Greek manuscript preserved by the Greeks. It made its appearance in the King James Version ultimately from the Latin Vulgate.

The Greek texts of the early Reformation printers were vastly superior to the Latin versions previously circulated. From these Greek texts the early English translations came—including the renowned King James Version of 1611. Very few basic errors appear in the King James Version—though it is by no means a perfect or clear translation.

But the work of the early printers was not continued. Critics—English and German—gradually ceased to search out the official Greek text preserved in various parts of Greece, particularly in Mount Athos—where the bulk of New Testament Manuscripts are still located. Instead they have turned away from the bulk of these accurate New Testament manuscripts of Greece to the corrupted texts of Rome and especially Egypt! These faulty texts have been used for nearly all modern translations of the Bible during the past 75 years—and especially in the *Revised Standard Version* and the *New English Translation*.

The Bible-Publishing Nations

God used—and is using—the Jews and Greeks to preserve His Word in their original languages. But neither Jews nor Greeks have published the Bible in quantity for all the nations to read in their own languages. That duty has been committed to the birthright nations of the House of Israel—the nations who inherited from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, immense national blessings so they would be able to distribute Bibles at little or no cost to all nations around the world.

Who are the birthright holders who were to become the world's leading

publishers of Bibles in all languages? The English-speaking nations—the British Commonwealth and the United States of America.

Our peoples are identified in Bible prophecy. It's made plain in our astounding free booklet *The United States and the British Commonwealth in Prophecy*.

The ten tribes of the ancient House of Israel rejected God. They went into Assyrian captivity after a three-year siege 721-718 B.C. God promised to withhold His birthright blessings from them for 2520 years—seven prophetic "times" (7x360). That penalty ended in 1803.

What happened *that very year*? British engineers and financiers in 1803 produced the first practical papermaking machine in history. In 1804 the British and Foreign Bible Society was founded. By an extraordinary "coincidence" Lord Stanhope had in the same year perfected a stereotyping process. That process made Bible manufacturing cheap, accurate and speedy!

In 1805 massive numbers of the English New Testament appeared. A complete Bible for quantity distribution appeared in 1806. Friedrich König, a German, came to London in 1806, and in four years perfected the printing-machine. The story, if continued, would fill pages. This is one of the greatest series of events in history. It ranks in importance with the Jewish and Greek preservation of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures! Yet the world today takes little note of the greatest of the birthright blessings!

Do We Have ALL the Bible?

One final question should be answered with regard to the preservation of Scripture. Do we have all the Bible?

The testimony of history itself is that none of the Old Testament has been lost since the days of Christ. For nearly two thousand years, through persecution and war, the Jews have preserved the Old Testament exactly as God intended! The same books composing the Bible in Jesus' day are used today in the synagogues and in the churches.

But what about the fact that some Bibles have seven more books (the Apocrypha) added to the Old Testament than do the Jews and most Protestants? Are these added books part of the Bible—or are they spurious?

The official authority of God for the Old Testament was vested in the Priesthood and the officially appointed Scribes in Palestine (Matthew 23:2). This Priesthood never accepted the Apocrypha. The Apocrypha are uninspired books written by unconverted men. These books contain definite errors, plus a measure of truth—just as all human books do. The apostles never quoted from the Apocrypha. They never referred to these seven added books as inspired. Even the Catholic Church did not accept them until about 398 A.D., at the Council of Carthage—300 years after the Bible was completed in the days of the apostle John!

The Greek Bibles used by the inspired New Testament Church under the guidance of the apostles did not contain the Apocrypha. These *unin-*

spired books were not added until after 315 A.D. according to the admission of the Catholic bishop Cyril of Jerusalem. Here is proof that the Apocrypha was never approved by Christ or the apostles. The Bible was completed in the days of the apostles!

The same may be said of the so-called "Lost books of the Bible." These books were never lost because they were never a part of the Bible. They are outright frauds! They are spurious—uninspired—and full of errors!

If you want the full story of the Apocrypha, write for the article "Do We Have the Complete Bible?"

But what about the New Testament? Is it complete? Here again the testimony is the same—the New Testament has been preserved exactly! The early Greeks recognized no other New Testament books than we have today. No New Testament book has been lost.

If you want an illustration of God's intervention to preserve His Word, turn to Jeremiah 36, beginning with verse 23. King Jehoiakim had an entire scroll of the Word of God cut with a penknife and consumed by a fire. Certainly burning the only copy of the Word of God would destroy it if anything would!—he thought.

But what happened? Did it perish forever? No! Read the account in Jeremiah 36:32.

You can depend on the Bible. It is the inspired Word of God in print! It carries absolute authority. By it you are going to be *judged!*