

# B·I·B·L·E & L·I·F·E

## Bible Teaching Newsletter

of Biblical Doctrine & New Testament Assembly Life

Vol. 13. No. 4

Sept. 1, 2006

### The Phenomenon of Holy Scripture

by David Dunlap

It is a tremendous understatement to say that the Bible is unlike any other book. But it is nevertheless true! The Bible is the most loved book, but at the same time, the most hated book in the history of the world. The Bible is the first book ever printed and yet remains the best-selling book of all time in nearly every language of the world. Its claims, truths, and prophecies are unique, powerful, and life-transforming. For this reason, God calls His Word *living* (Heb. 4:12)! Moreover, God has built life into His Word. For centuries God has used these Scriptures to capture the hearts of men and women from every time and culture—the rich and poor, the proud and the humble, the educated and the unschooled. The Bible is amazingly accurate in all that it teaches and affirms. The primary message of the Bible is one of salvation. However, when the Bible deals with history, nature, science, or archaeology, it reveals advanced knowledge that is true and verifiable. The Bible's wisdom, knowledge, and ethics clearly evidence its divine origin to anyone seeking answers to life's most profound questions. There is no explanation for this phenomenon called the Bible except divine inspiration.

#### The Inspiration of Scripture

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"(2 Tim. 3:16). What do Christian scholars mean when they say that the Bible is divinely inspired? The term "plenary verbal" has been used to convey something of inspiration's breadth and scope. The word "plenary" points to the inspiration of every book, chapter, and verse of Scripture. The second half of the term, "verbal", points to the fact that every *word* of Scripture is divinely inspired. Thus, we might say that inspiration is the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit upon biblical authors which ensures all their writings to be true, infallible, and inerrant. However, a remarkable fact of Scripture is that, although the Bible clearly states the *fact* of its inspiration, it never seeks within its pages to defend it. Some have wondered at this paradox. The beloved Bible teacher C. H. Mackintosh (1820-1896) was once asked why the Bible does not defend its inspiration. He replied, "It would be like taking a flashlight and pointing it towards the sun to prove it was still shining!" His point was that the Bible itself is its greatest defense. Nevertheless, the Bible bears the imprint of the Eternal from cover to cover.

#### Indestructibility of Scripture

An exceptional book may remain in print for twenty-five years. One that is read for a century is very unusual, and those that remain for a thousand years are extremely rare. Yet the Bible has remained the most popular book in the world for thousands of years, despite the fact that it has faced the most determined efforts to

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**"Those who know the facts now recognize that the New Testament must be accepted as a remarkably accurate source book."**

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**Dr. Clifford Wilson**  
Prominent Australian  
Archaeologist

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attack and destroy it.

Since the time of the Roman emperor Diocletian (303 A.D.) down through the centuries unto our own day, many have tried to rid the world of the Bible. Through military might and oppression, the Roman empire, the Catholic church, Communist governments, and governments of Muslim lands have all sought to attack or destroy the Bible. Yet none have seen more than only a measure of success. In the 1700's, the Scriptures came under attack by "Enlightenment" skeptics and atheistic philosophers such as Voltaire, Thomas Paine, and others. But their efforts were even less effective. Voltaire, the French humanist, once proclaimed, "Fifty years from now, the world will hear no more of the Bible". However, fifty years after the death of Voltaire, Bibles were being printed by the Geneva Bible Society in the very house where Voltaire had lived and on his own presses. Such attacks did not serve to weaken faith in the Scriptures but rather to strengthen faith in them. The French Huguenots, who were fiercely persecuted for their faith, portrayed the Bible and Christianity as an anvil surrounded by three blacksmiths. Beneath the picture they inscribed these words:

"The more they pound, and the more they shout,  
the more they wear their hammers out!"

The indestructibility of God's Word has been verified unto this day. Scripture reminds us, "The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the Word of God abides forever" (1 Peter 1:24-25).

### Archaeological Evidence

Abundant findings and detailed research in the field of archaeology have supported the authenticity of the Biblical accounts. For generations textual critics and modernist scholars have scoffed at the history and accuracy of the biblical accounts. However, in the last twenty-five years archaeological discoveries have proven the Bible right and liberal scholars wrong. Dr. Nelson Glueck, the most outstanding Jewish archaeologist of the twentieth century, wrote:

It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or in exact detail historical statements in the Bible.<sup>1</sup>

Archaeology's affirmation of the biblical record is no better seen than in the account of a census taken during the reign of Herod when Quirinius was governor of Syria. For generations liberal scholars scoffed at the idea that such censuses were ever enacted. They reasoned: how could a government possibly force all its citizens to return to their birthplace? They also challenged Bible-believing Christians to show any proof that such a census ever was undertaken in the ancient Middle East. However, in recent years documents have been discovered that provide support for such censuses. Evangelical scholar Dr. John McRay, in his book *Archaeology and the New Testament* furnishes us with a document from the first century. The document reads:

Gaius Vibius Maximus, Prefect of Egypt [says]: Seeing the time is come for the house to house census, it is necessary to compel all those who for any cause whatsoever are residing out of their provinces to return to their own homes, that they may both carry out the regular order of the census and may also attend diligently to the cultivation of their allotments.<sup>2</sup>

This discovery, along with many others, supports the veracity of Scripture. Some recent archaeological discoveries that further support the biblical text are: the Elba tablets, the existence of the Hittite empire, the walls of Jericho, the Pavement (the court where Jesus was tried), and the pool of Bethesda.

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body of  
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of good  
textual  
attestation as  
the New  
Testament."**

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**Dr. F. F. Bruce**

Former Professor at the  
University of Manchester—  
author of *New Testament  
Documents are They Reliable*

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## Authenticity Test

Bible-believing scholars have pointed to the “Authenticity Test” as the textual cornerstone for the reliability of Scripture. According to the authenticity test, the genuineness of a document is determined by the number of copies that were made from the original manuscript (hand-written document), the time interval between the original and the copies, and the number of discrepancies within the copies. Based upon this test, the New Testament is the most reliable document of comparable age in existence. Presently, there are 20,000 hand-written copies of the New Testament in existence. Homer’s *Iliad*, which has only 643 manuscript copies, ranks second to the New Testament in manuscript authority (numbers of copies). Furthermore, the earliest copies of the New Testament manuscripts are extremely close to the time when the originals were penned. Moreover, there is only a 2% variation within the manuscripts—most of these variations being accounted for by differences in spelling and punctuation! In the manuscripts in existence, there is not one variation which alters any fundamental point of Christian doctrine. For this reason, the former director of the British Museum and respected New Testament textual scholar, Sir Frederic G. Kenyon, has said:

The interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.<sup>3</sup>

The authenticity test, then, assures us that the New Testament is the most reliable piece of ancient classical literature in existence today! However, before we leave this point, a look at the manuscripts of classical works is striking. For example, the earliest copy of Tacitus’s *Annals* was written 1,000 years after the original and there are only 20 manuscript copies in existence today. Likewise, the earliest copy of Suetonius’s *The Twelve Caesars* was written 800 years after the original and there are only 8 copies in existence. In contrast, the earliest copies of the New Testament were written 50 years after they were originally authored and there are nearly 24,000 manuscript portions in existence today!

## The Dead Sea Scrolls

In 1947, a young shepherd boy searching for his lost goat made one of the greatest manuscript discoveries of all time. In the limestone caves overlooking the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea, he discovered over 900 documents, representing 350 separate biblical and non-biblical works. In one cave alone, 520 texts were found dating as far back as the third century B.C. The scrolls contained copies of every Old Testament book except the book of Esther. Before the scrolls were discovered in 1947, the oldest existing complete manuscript of the Old Testament dated around 900 A. D. One of the Dead Sea scrolls found in cave #1 at Qumran dated at 125 B.C. contains the entire prophecy of Isaiah. This scroll was penned over 1,000 years before any of the manuscripts (Masoretic text) previously possessed. Amazingly, the text of the earlier and later copies were identical in 95% of the text. The other 5% variation consisted of spelling errors, grammar, and punctuation oversights. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls reveals the remarkable dedication to detail of the Hebrew copyists of the Old Testament Scriptures. Critics and skeptics were shocked at how closely these ancient texts resemble our present-day Bibles. Recent textual research on New Testament manuscripts combined with the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls demonstrates beyond reasonable doubt the amazing accuracy of the Scriptures.

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**“If we compare the present state of the New Testament text with that of any other ancient writing, we must...declare it to be marvelously correct. The New Testament is unrivaled among ancient writings.”**

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**Dr. B. B. Warfield**

Former Professor of  
Systematic Theology at  
Princeton Seminary, NJ

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A nonprofit ministry of Bible and Life Ministries, Inc.  
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U. S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT #6658  
TAMPA, FL

FORWARDING SERVICE REQUESTED

September 2006

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Bible and Life is published periodically and sent out free of charge and is supported entirely by the free will offerings of the Lord's people. checks should be made out to "Bible and Life Ministries, Inc."

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## Prophetic Evidence

Finally, the prophetic teaching of Scripture is one of the most persuasive proofs for inspiration. There are about 3,856 verses directly or indirectly concerned with prophecy in Scripture—about one verse out of every six tells of future events. The Old and New Testaments equally reveal God's imprint upon future world events. The destruction of Tyre, the invasion of Jerusalem, the fall of Babylon and Rome—each were accurately predicted in the Bible and fulfilled to the minute details. When we contrast this with the religions of the world, the Bible stands alone. Buddhism, Confucianism, and Islam all have their own sacred writings, but in them the element of prophecy is strikingly absent. It is as if the divine Author uses this truth to set Himself apart from the gods of this world. God's challenge to the world is, "Prove me now—I am the Lord...I speak, and the word that I speak shall come to pass" (Jer. 28:9, Ezek. 12:25, 24:14). No other work of man in any language even faintly resembles the intricate structure and design of the Bible. The fact remains—only an infinite mind could have devised this Book of books.

## Conclusion

The body of evidence in support of the inspiration of Holy Scripture is overwhelming and convincing. The historical, scientific, and moral proof of the reliability of Scripture stands as a high impregnable fortress. Nevertheless liberal critics and skeptics have hurled their attacks and issued their challenges, but not one has succeeded in weakening the truth of Holy Scripture.

The Bible is a book with a universal message for all men. It is the only volume in which both a child and a scholar can find equal delight. Its simple, life-changing power transcends national borders, cultural barriers, and language differences, bringing peace, joy, and forgiveness to countless millions. Only the Bible can make bad men good and transform a rebel into a saint. The greatest proof of the Bible is the difference it can make in your life.

## Endnotes

1. Dr. Nelson Glueck, *Rivers in the Desert*, (New York, NY: Grove, 1960), p. 31
2. Dr. John McRay, *Archaeology and the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991), p. 155
3. Frederic G. Kenyon, *The Story of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1967), p. 133)

