



R E M E D I A L
Christianity

*Correcting Deficiencies in Popular
Christianity*

#3 – Why Should I Believe The Bible?

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@integrity.com
www.branchofhope.org
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Review

We've addressed the need to establish a starting place for truth, knowledge, ethics, etc. If there is no agreement regarding a starting place for truth, all discussions will be futile. If one person believes that the starting place for ethics is what he feels is right, he will never come to agree (other than by coincidence) with another person who believes the starting place for truth to be the teachings of Gandhi or the Constitution.

We then offered the assertion that the starting place for truth, knowledge, and ethics for the Christian is the Bible. We gave a brief overview of what the Bible actually is – sixty-six books written by forty different authors over a fifteen hundred year period. Along with the overview we discussed the overarching message of Scripture.

That message, in short, is that there is a God who is good and holy. He created all things and created them good. God created man who rebelled against God and death entered. It did not please God, though, to leave men at the mercy of death so God made a promise (a covenant) that through the seed of the woman (speaking of the eventual birth of Jesus), the enemy of God's people (Satan, sin, death, etc.) would be destroyed.

The primary message in Scripture is that there is a God who will glorify Himself through His redemptive plan to save sinners through the cross of Christ. This is what led Jesus to say, **"You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me" (John 5:39).**

What Do You Need to See?

The question before us this morning is why should we believe the Bible? If I said I had some evidence behind the podium that will convince you beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Bible is true, what would you expect to see? The Shroud of Turin? The Ark of the Covenant? An old dusty scroll written by some Roman potentate? A piece of the cross? Just what would I have to come up with in order to convince you to believe that the Bible is true? Even if I had all those artifacts, how would you know they're legit?

I could say that we should believe in the Bible because it is true. In fact that is what I will end up saying. But being the reasonable and rational people that we are, we would certainly be unconvinced at such a circular statement. The conclusion is contained in the premise. We have begged the question.

Since we are, therefore, so very rational, what would convince us to make our starting place – our bedrock – our standard to measure all truth – the Bible? What if I were to pile payloads of archeological, anthropological, and historical data demonstrating and affirming the impeccable accuracy of Scripture?

Testimony of Science

I could also produce archeological recantations of errors regarding cultures (like the Hittites) that scientists said never existed, but of which the Bible spoke; cultures that archeologists later unearthed, thus further verifying the testimony of Scripture. There are bags of this kind of evidence. All good science affirms things already found in Scripture.

Evidential argumentation for the veracity of the Bible is a very common practice for remedial Christians. And, as Dr. Greg Bahnsen stated, “they work if you have an unsophisticated audience.” Why is this unsophisticated reasoning? It should be obvious that if you decide to believe the Bible due to the testimony of science, science, and not the Bible, is your starting place for truth. Let’s briefly pursue this.

Do you not find it interesting that scientists never feel the need to justify their starting place for knowledge? The empiricist (scientist) proudly asserts that he only believes that which he can observe. In order for something to be true, it must fall under the scientific method. (The scientific method is usually something like testability, measurability, observe-ability and repeatability.) Of course the scientific method itself is none of these. Science, as a starting place for knowledge or truth, crumbles under its own method. We all know that looks can be deceiving. The oar, when placed in the water, appears to be bent. It will appear to be bent if I place in the water a thousand times. But we all know it does not bend. Or does it? Do you trust your sense of sight over touch?

I have great respect for good science. But science cannot be the starting place for truth. Science is dependent on there being a thing called truth in order for it to work. If all this is too difficult, read a sixty-year-old science book and find out how much of the truth *then* is still truth *today*.

History

A very popular evidential argument for the truth of the Bible is found in the assertion that the Bible is historically verifiable. Things are cited like clear testimonies from non-Christian ancient Roman governors regarding the truths contained in Scripture. An argument I was fond of using was that the fact of the cross is as historically verifiable as the fact that Napoleon was at the battle of Waterloo. But I don’t know if Napoleon was at the battle of Waterloo. I might have a hard time finding Waterloo on a map. For all I know Napoleon had a twin; pretty slim evidence on which to rest your eternal soul.

Changed Lives

Another tactic for remedial Christians is to seek to impress people with the effect the Bible has had in the lives of people. As one young man said regarding a discussion he had with unbelievers, “They can’t deny my testimony.” Why can’t they deny your testimony? Others have testimonies. Muslims have

testimonies. Jews have testimonies. AA members have testimonies. Tony Robbins' followers have testimonies. Certainly the Bible is responsible for changing the lives of billions, but that is relatively unimpressive in terms of an argument for it being true.

Fulfilled Prophecies

What of all the fulfilled prophecies? There were numerous and detailed prophecies made about the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Christ in the Old Testament that came to pass in the New Testament. But this argument is not compelling to someone who simply doesn't believe in the Old or New Testaments.

The Futility of Argumentation

It is my opinion that all the arguments in the world, no matter how sound, will not convince someone to believe in the Bible. If someone is committed to unbelief, they will interpret all arguments through their grid of unbelief. Those who hold the position that miracles can't happen will never believe it was a miracle. Considering the event to be miraculous is not an option. They will employ Sherlock Holmes' methodology, "eliminate the impossible and then whatever is left, regardless of how improbable, is your only option." If your starting place for knowledge doesn't allow for miracles and you saw me perform a miracle you would simply assert that there is some natural explanation, even if you don't yet know what it is.

Arguing Nonetheless

So what to do! I guess I could just dismiss everybody right now. I have miserably failed at accomplishing the thesis of my sermon. But since I believe that that which is impossible with man is possible with God, I would like to go ahead and make a three-fold argument for the truth of the Bible. My first argument will be weak, my second argument will be weak as well, but my third argument will be undeniable. My first argument is that no other world view can give a plausible explanation for reality as we know it. My second argument is that the Bible does give a plausible explanation for reality, and my third argument is...well, we'll get to that.

No Plausible World View

My first argument has, pretty much, already been made. There is no world view (other than the one found in the Bible) that can explain the reality we all observe. Those who believe that the universe is eternal cannot explain how we reached today since it is impossible to cross an infinite span of time. Those who believe that the universe did not exist at one time cannot give any explanation as to where the material came from that started the universe or why

it exploded when it was not acted upon by an outside object (a violation of the laws of physics).

Those who don't believe in the biblical account of creation cannot explain the essence of ethics. If man, and not the Bible, is the final determiner of what is right then *which* man? In short, those who reject the Bible cannot give any rational explanation for the material or immaterial world we all observe. C.S. Lewis said it in his usual humorous and thought-provoking fashion.

If the solar system was brought about by an accidental collision, then the appearance of organic life on this planet was also an accident, and the whole evolution of Man was an accident too. If so, then all our present thoughts are mere accidents – the accidental by-products of the movement of atoms. And this holds for the thoughts of the materialists and astronomers as well as for anyone else's. But if *their* thoughts – i.e. of materialism and astronomy – are merely accidental by-products, why should we believe them to be true? I see no reason for believing that one accident should be able to give me a correct account of all other accidents. It's like expecting that the accidental shape taken by the splash when you upset the milkjug should give you a correct account of how the jug was made and why it was upset.

I remember finding this type of argument quite compelling. I think the statements are accurate and we should all be properly impressed to think this out. But I certainly haven't proven the Bible to be true.

A Plausible World View

My second argument has already been made as well. The Bible's account of creation gives a plausible explanation for the reality that has caused philosophers and scientists to scratch their heads for centuries. There is an eternal self-existent God who has created everything both material and immaterial. The reason philosophers have any ability to think clearly is because they have been made in the image of God, and the reason science works is because God has created a uniform nature. We learn all this in the Bible. It is simple, it is true, it explains everything, yet men bend over backwards to find other, less tenable, explanations.

Though I believe this to be true I also recognize that men can simply assert that the quest of history will find some other explanation for the reality we all observe. I have made an argument but I haven't proven anything.

Argument #3

God's Word in Writing

Let us cruise into my third argument (the undeniable one) with a little history lesson. In the 1640's one of the greatest Christian confessions (*The*

Westminster Confession of Faith) ever written (by men wiser than I) began by addressing and defending the Bible. They wrote,

I, 1. Our natural understanding and the works of creation and providence so clearly show God's goodness, wisdom, and power that human beings have no excuse. However, these means alone cannot provide that knowledge of God and of His will which is necessary for salvation. Therefore it pleased the Lord at different times and in various ways to reveal Himself and to declare that this revelation contains His will for His church. Afterwards it pleased God to put this entire revelation into writing so that the truth might be better preserved and transmitted and that the church, confronted with the corruption of the flesh and the evil purposes of Satan and the world, might be more securely established and comforted. Since God no longer reveals Himself to His people in those earlier ways, Holy Scripture is absolutely essential.

In short, general revelation (things creation reveals about God) is only sufficient to hold men without excuse. Further revelation is necessary for salvation. God revealed Himself, in a special way, through apostles, prophets, etc., and then committed the revelation to writing, that the transmission of His word might be better preserved.

Having put forth the essential nature of the Holy Scriptures, how would these brilliant teachers justify their assertion that the Scriptures are the word of God? What is their argumentation?

Circularity?

I, 4. The Bible speaks authoritatively and so deserves to be believed and obeyed. This authority does not depend on the testimony of any man or church but completely on God, its author, Who is Himself truth. The Bible therefore is to be accepted as true, because it is the word of God.

This sounds very circular. The Bible is to be accepted because it is the word of God. We know it is the word of God because it says it is. Perhaps circularity was not something from which the divines of Westminster sought to hide. In some form, it seems that circularity is practiced by everybody. Robert D. Preus, in his explanation of Thomas Aquinas on Scripture states, as we mentioned earlier,

All sciences argue from principles and do not try to prove their principles. This it is also with theology, whose principles (*principia*) are the articles of faith. In philosophy the lower

sciences cannot dispute or prove the principles of a higher science. Sacred Scripture offers the highest science.¹

The empiricist, assuming his position to be soundest, uses empiricism, to argue the truth of his position. The rationalist does the same. If someone believes their world view to be true and the soundest explanation of reality, it is only reasonable for them to make the arguments for their world view, using the principles of their world view. Why would anyone abandon what they believe to be the soundest principles available for the development of their argument? Preus also states,

The philosopher will, for instance, work out proofs for the existence of God, but only with the presupposition that he already believes in God. He does not make himself temporarily an atheist.²

Neutrality?

If Christians view the atheist as wrong and foolish, why would they adopt the atheistic worldview as a starting point for their argumentation? Herein lies the modern myth of neutrality. G.I. Williamson comments on this:

Sometimes Protestants have unwittingly done this too. It has often happened in the dealings of Christians with unbelievers. The unbeliever claims that he sees nothing in the Bible to demand belief that it is the word of God. And the believer has all too often, in effect, granted that the unbeliever has had some justification for his position. The believer may even imagine that he can find a “neutral” starting point at which he and the unbeliever are in agreement. Then, it is thought, a series of arguments can be erected on the neutral starting point which in the end might possibly prove that the Bible is the Word of God (or perhaps equally as well that it is not). Thus human reason or archaeology or history, etc., may be made the starting point, and unconsciously this starting point becomes the “higher authority” before which judgment bar God must pass muster. This in effect makes some authority higher than the authority of God. And this cannot be done (cf. Heb. 6:16-18)³

Dr. Greg Bahnsen equates this methodology with immorality:

No such compromise is even possible. “No man is *able* to serve two lords” (Matt. 6:24). It should come as no surprise that, in a world where all things have been created by Christ (Col. 1:16) and are carried along by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3) and where all knowledge is therefore deposited in Him who is the

¹ Norman Geisler, *Inerrancy* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), p. 369.

² Geisler, p. 368.

³ G. I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith, for study classes*, (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1964), p. 8.

Truth (Col. 2:3; John 14:6) and who must be Lord over all thinking (2 Cor. 10:5), neutrality is nothing short of immorality.
“Whosoever therefore would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4)⁴

According to Bahnsen, and others, to approach the defense of the Scriptures as if they are not the primary authority on earth is dishonest. This is not to say I am not allowed to view things hypothetically. For example I can hypothesize, “Let’s say for a moment there is no God.” But for me to actually grant that there may not be a God when I actually believe the Bible is true would be dishonest to my highest belief.

The Church Made the Bible

It is not uncommon for Christians to argue that the church somehow established, rather than recognized, the authenticity (canonicity) of Scripture. Don’t we have to believe that the church accurately put the canon together (in which case the church has authority over the Bible – a common claim of Roman Catholicism)? A.A. Hodge points out the, all important, canonical position in Christendom:

This proposition is designed to deny the Romish heresy that the inspired church is the ultimate source of all divine knowledge, and that the written Scripture and ecclesiastical tradition alike depend upon the authoritative seal of the Church for their credibility. They thus make the Scriptures a product of the Spirit through the Church; while, in fact, the Church is a product of the Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word⁵

Fallible Witnesses

Neither science, nor philosophy nor the church can take precedent over the authority of the word of God. The Bible will not be a defendant at the mercy of these fallible witnesses. As Paul wrote, **“let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written...” (Romans 3:4)**. Notice that Paul equates his statement to that which is *written*. R.C. Sproul (actually quoting John Calvin) writes,

Nothing, therefore, can be more absurd than the fiction, that the power of judging Scriptures is in the Church, and that on her nod its certainty depends. When the Church receives it, and gives it the stamp of her authority, she does not make that authentic which was otherwise doubtful or controverted, but acknowledging it as the truth of God, she, as in duty bound, shows her reverence by an unhesitating assent.⁶

⁴ Greg Bahnsen, *Always Ready*, (American Vision, 1996), p. 9.

⁵ A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith* (Banner of Truth, 1869), pp. 35,36.

⁶ Geisler, p. 339

The Value of Evidence

What we will see in paragraph five, is that the Westminster Confession did not discount the value of the church (or other lesser resources) but found a proper, yet subordinate, place for these evidences.

I, 5. We may be influenced by the testimony of the church to value the Bible highly and reverently, and Scripture itself shows in so many ways that it is God's word; for example, in its spiritual subject matter, in the effectiveness of its teaching, the majesty of its style, the agreement of all its parts, its unified aim from beginning to end (to give all glory to God), the full revelation it makes of the only way of man's salvation, its many other incomparably outstanding features, and its complete perfection. However, we are completely persuaded and assured of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Bible only by the inward working of the Holy Spirit, Who testifies by and with the word in our hearts.

Sproul writes about the value Calvin saw with evidence (*indicia*).

Calvin enumerates the *indicia* or evidence the Scriptures have for their divine origin and authority. He speaks of the dignity of the matter, the heavenliness of its doctrine, the content of its parts, the majesty of its style, the antiquity of its teaching, the sincerity of its narrative, its miracles, predictive prophecies fulfilled, its use through the ages, and its witness by the blood of martyrs. He sees this evidence not as being weak and tentative but objectively strong and compelling.⁷

It doesn't seem that Calvin, or the divines of Westminster, would have eliminated the value of external evidence altogether. To the extent that any evidence is credibly evaluated, it will testify to the truth of God's holy word. The Scriptures will, no doubt, stand up under any legitimate scrutiny or evaluative gaze fixed upon it.

The historical testimony of the church (and other lesser resources) is quite impressive. The spiritual subject matter contained in the Bible along with the effectiveness of its teaching is also worthy of our respect. The majesty of its style, the agreement of all its parts, its unified aim from beginning to end (to give all glory to God) leaves the Scriptures unsurpassed as an historical document and reaches the zenith of any literary or historical analysis. For sixty-six books written by forty different authors over a 1500-year period to have such harmony is practically beyond human explanation.

If archeology, anthropology, or astronomy were properly pursued, and their conclusions properly evaluated, there is little doubt that these modern

⁷ Geisler, p. 343.

disciplines will also testify to the Scriptures in such a way to be virtually undeniable.

Evidences – Subordinate to Internal Testimony

But let us be firmly convinced that compared to Scripture, all other evaluative tools are dubious at best. We “are completely persuaded and assured of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Bible only by the inward working of the Holy Spirit, Who testifies by and with the word in our hearts.” Sproul, quoting Calvin:

Let it therefore be held as fixed, that those who are inwardly taught by the Holy Spirit acquiesce implicitly in Scripture; that Scripture, carrying its own evidence along with it, deigns not to submit to proofs and arguments, but owes the full conviction with which we ought to receive it to the testimony of the Spirit.⁸

Blindly obvious it should be now to observe the folly of strapping the Scriptures to the defendants’ table while marching witnesses and evidences in and out of courtroom. The Scriptures deign “not to submit to proofs and arguments.”

One wonders how a brilliant scholar like Calvin might proceed in this defense of Scripture. Perhaps he would not deign the Scriptures to submit to proofs but require the views of his opponents to submit to proofs. Perhaps, rather than guarding the castle, he would cast down the strongholds by answering the fool according to his folly. His argumentation might go, “If that be so, then how do you explain...?” I don’t wish to speculate too much here. Suffice it to say, Calvin would not subject the word of God to the scrutiny of dust, nor should we. As he states:

These [*indicia*], however, cannot of themselves produce a firm faith in Scripture until our heavenly Father manifest his presence in it, and thereby secure implicit reverence for it... Still the human testimonies which go to confirm it will not be without effect, if they are used in subordination to that chief and highest proof as secondary helps to our weakness. But it is foolish to attempt to prove to infidels that the Scripture is the Word of God. This cannot be known to be, except by faith (VIII/13).⁹

Preus indicates that Calvin’s position was nothing new. Below we read of the disposition of the church Fathers a thousand years before Calvin or the divines of Westminster:

According to the Fathers, Scripture is *a priori* (from the former) true, irrefragably so. Scripture needs no verification of any kind from outside authority.¹⁰

⁸ Geisler, p. 342.

⁹ Geisler, p. 343.

¹⁰ Geisler, p. 365.

It would seem that the church fathers also viewed the Scriptures as *a priori* true. Verification may be well and good. It might even be part of a discussion. But it was not needed. Preus, quoting Luther, shows this to be the position leading into the Reformation as well:

Paul takes them all together, himself, an angel from heaven, teachers upon the earth, and masters of all kinds, and subjects them to the Holy Scriptures. Scripture must reign as queen, all must obey and be subject to her, not teachers, judges, or arbiters over her; but they must be simply witnesses, pupils and confessors of it, whether it be pope or Luther or Augustine or an angel from heaven.¹¹

Preus, commenting on Luther's position,

This statement of Luther indicates also that Scripture is infallibly true in all its assertions, irrefragable. We need not test it with reason, experience, or any other authority. Its utterances can and ought to be accepted *a priori*.¹²

Let's not mistake Preus' comments here to suggest that the Scriptures are not reasonable but that it is unreasonable for man (whose reason is at best flawed) to subject the pinnacle of truth to his feeble scrutiny.

The Undeniable Argument

My third and undeniable argument is that the Bible is to be believed because it is true and because to deny its truth is to deny something we know to be true. Jesus taught,

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

The word of God has sufficient authority to act as a judge for all mankind. It is my prayer that by the grace of God we will all recognize the insanity of seeking to judge that which in reality judges us.

For 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. ¹³And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Hebrews 4:12, 13 NASB).

My argument for believing the Bible to be true is not a matter of evidences or speculation. And it certainly isn't a matter of convincing people to make a

¹¹ Geisler, p. 374.

¹² Geisler, p. 379.

blind leap of faith into a mythological, nonsensical fairy tale. It is more like bringing people to their senses – to quit denying the obvious. Specifically we are called to repent of our rejection of that which we all know to be true. To argue against the truth of Scripture is like arguing against the existence of air. Every time you inhale in order to make your next point, your argument becomes weaker.

But those who are willing to acquiesce before the profound truths of the Holy word of God will find on these pages light and life. The message is a message from heaven, a message of redemption. The message itself is the means by which the redemption is applied. Come and Thy people bless and give Thy word success. Amen.

Questions for Study

1. Why is it important to have an established starting place for truth (page 1)?
2. How many books are in the Bible? How many authors? Over how long a period (page 1)?
3. What is the over-arching theme of Scripture (page 1)?
4. What would impress you to believe the Bible to be true? Why would it be sufficiently impressive (page 1)?
5. Why is science a poor starting place for truth (page 2)?
6. Why is historical documentation insufficient to validate the Bible (page 4)?
7. Are “changed lives” a powerful argument for the truth of the Bible (page 2)?
8. Why are evidential arguments for the truth of the Bible futile (page 3)?
9. What is wrong with an unbiblical worldview (pages 3, 4)?
10. How does the Bible plausibly explain the world as we know it (pages 4, 5)?
11. In what way does everyone argue in a circular fashion (pages 5, 6)?
12. Why is neutrality a myth (pages 6, 7)?
13. Did the church make the Bible (page 7)?
14. What value is evidence (pages 8-10)?
15. What is the undeniable argument for the truth of the Bible (pages 10, 11)?