

Why the Bible is trustworthy

Answering alleged discrepancies and errors in Scripture

Introduction

For centuries sceptics have tried to denounce the Bible by claiming that it is filled with inaccuracies of every sort, contradictions and appalling errors. None of these charges have ever stuck because eminent expositors have proved that the accusations were false. In every generation men have arisen to defend the Bible's veracity. However, in these dark days such works seem to be missing.

This is my attempt to make some defences against standard accusations. It will only cover a few of the many charges against Scripture in this paper. I may write others. This work is not going to be extensive detailed analysis, which you can get from classic apologetics, but a concise summary of the key points.

Jesus did not exist in history

If Jesus did not exist as a historical figure then the Christian church would have collapsed and disappeared centuries ago. So many people have claimed this and failed to substantiate the claim. The church has prevailed.

Firstly, if Jesus did not exist then the Gospels would have been castigated and destroyed since when they appeared many of the original witnesses of the events were still alive. If the Gospels were lies and myth there would not have been mass conversion to Christ by the people reading them who could contact these witnesses.

There would not have been the active persecution of the church by Jewish religious leaders if Jesus never existed. This persecution continued for centuries.

There are many historical documents from secular sources which mention that Jesus existed and was a Jewish prophet, a miracle worker, or even the Messiah. These include the Jewish historian Josephus¹ writing for the Romans, the historian Tacitus and the Latin letter writer Pliny.²

Josephus' testimony:

Now there was about this time Jesus, a wise man, if it be lawful to call him a man; for he was a doer of wonderful works, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to him both many of the Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was [the] Christ. And when Pilate, at the suggestion of the principal men amongst us, had condemned him to the cross, those that loved him at the first did not forsake him; for he appeared to them alive again the third day; as the divine prophets had foretold these and ten thousand other wonderful things concerning him. And the tribe of Christians, so named from him, are not extinct at this day.³

¹ Flavius Josephus, (born Joseph ben Matthias) c.37–c.100. A Jewish historian, general, and Pharisee.

² Pliny the Younger; full name Gaius Plinius Caecilius Secundus [61–112], was a senator and consul, and nephew of the Elder Pliny. He governed Bithynia (in present-day Turkey).

³ Flavius Josephus, Wars of the Jews, 3.3.

They (Christians) were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god.⁴

They got their name from Christ, who was executed by sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius.⁵

The Jewish Babylonian Talmud (a product of the Pharisees) castigates Jesus as a false prophet in multiple places. It does not deny that he existed but attacks him as a false messiah. It also affirms that his mother was Mary, whom they also denounce, and that he came from Nazareth. One example is, '*Jesus was hanged on Passover Eve. Forty days previously the herald had cried, "He is being led out for stoning, because he had practised sorcery and led Israel astray"*'.⁶

The Gospel of Luke and his Acts of the Apostles were written to give historical facts to a Roman person of some rank called Theophilus. The title, 'most excellent' (Lk 1:3) is a title of honour and rank, similar to 'your Excellency'. The same title is used by Paul in addressing Felix (Acts 23:26, 24:3, the Roman Procurator of Judaea) and Festus his successor (Acts 26:25). Giving a Roman authority leader a false account would have been a capital crime. But the Roman accepted the historical narrative, since the Acts were written sometime after the Gospel, as he wanted to know what happened after the resurrection.

The Romans were well aware of the widespread following of what they perceived as a Jewish cult. They knew that this was centred in a man Suetonius⁷ named 'Chrestus'⁸ who was crucified by Pontius Pilate. Sometime later they identified these people as Christians after the name stuck in Antioch (Acts 11:26). There was never any doubt that Christianity was based on a real person whom many Romans derided as a crucified felon.

There is more documentary evidence that Jesus lived in Judaea in the time of Pontius Pilate than there is for many historical figures.

The Bible is just a book of myths

It is odd that other religious works that are clearly mythological are not accused of this. The Bible never uses mythology but claims to be fully true.

Firstly we must mention that the Bible is filled with a number of literary types, not just supernatural narratives. The Bible has some of the most exquisite poetry ever written (e.g. Psalms). It has historical narratives (e.g. Kings). It has individual biographies (e.g. Job). It has ancient wisdom literature (e.g. Proverbs). It has works of prophecy (e.g. Isaiah). It has apocalyptic books (e.g. Revelation). It has letters (e.g. the letters of Paul). It has love poetry (e.g. the Song of Solomon). It has lists of generations (e.g. the first 9 chapters of 1 Chron). It has an elegy⁹ (e.g. Lam). Describing the Bible as a book of myths is rather selective and foolish.

⁴ Pliny, 'Letter to Trajan'.

⁵ Tacitus, Annals, xv.44.

⁶ Sanhedrin 43a.

⁷ Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus [c.69–c.150 AD], Roman biographer and historian.

⁸ Suetonius, 'Lives of the 12 Caesars'.

⁹ An elaborately formal lyric poem lamenting the death of a friend or public figure or, in this case, the nation.

For the Bible to be full of myths means that a number of narratives must be proved to be fictional. This is normally pointed towards the miraculous element in historical narratives, of which there are many. A work analysing all of these would take many volumes. The greatest miracle is the resurrection of Jesus – which I will examine later proving its authenticity.

Now many of these miracles cannot be proved one way or the other today because they occurred in ancient history. However, what is certain is that the contemporary peoples (both godly and secular) did believe in them. For example, the parting of the Red Sea is a stupendous miracle but not only do all Jews, Muslims and Christians believe that this occurred (that is the bulk of the world's population) but the contemporary enemies of God believed it and were terrified. Over 40 years later the Canaanites were still terrified of the God of Israel because of the parting of the sea (Josh 2:10-11) and the destruction of the army of the then mightiest empire in the Levant (Egypt). There is no doubt that the nations of Canaan, Edom, Moab and Syria believed in this miracle.

The standing still of the river Jordan is another example. This also terrified the neighbouring nations who utterly believed it to be true (Josh 5:1) and probably witnessed the effect upstream.

The healing of Naaman, Syria's commander in chief, is a rare example of a Gentile healed by an Israelite prophet (Elisha). This was proved to be true by the taking of soil from Israel back to Syria so that Naaman could worship the God of Israel on his terms. This would have been public knowledge in Syria and Naaman's changed condition would also be widely known. If this did not occur then the Syrians could have used this to disgrace Israel as political capital. Indeed, Naaman's story begins with the king of Syria writing to the King of Israel asking for a healing. A failure would have been an insult and could lead to war. This healing had high political capital.

The global flood is considered a myth by many people. However, scientists of all sorts have established multiple proofs for a global flood. Analysis of this requires a book and not a few sentences. These include: every nation has a global flood story in its history with many of the details being similar. There is proof of a global flood in sedimentary layers of rock. The fossil layers prove that there was a very sudden deluge that trapped animals in mudslides, such as fossils showing an animal actually giving birth. Fossils do not get formed today in normal conditions.

There are some miracles that just cannot be analysed by reason and logic; they are either believed or denied. Such as the stopping of the sun (Josh 10:13). Just as no one can prove that this occurred, so can not one scientifically deny that it occurred. They can say that it is unlikely or that it goes against the laws of astrophysics but they cannot categorically affirm that it did not happen. That would be opinion and not science.

At the end of the day, God demands faith in his followers. There are tests to faith. Followers will accept the supernatural events described in Scripture as true acts of God even though they may be called fools for doing so. Sceptics may call them myths, but the Day of Judgment will make all things clear.

The resurrection of Jesus

Since most of my readers are familiar with the arguments to prove that the resurrection is true, I will simply list the chief pieces of data.

- If Jesus did not die on the cross there would be no Christianity. People do not give up their lives for a lie.
- The disciples were changed from fearful worriers to bold champions of the faith. Something really significant caused this change.
- Jesus really died on the cross, there was no swooning. The Romans were experts in executions and it was more than their lives were worth for a man to escape ordered punishment.
- No man could have survived being savagely beaten and scourged (worse than whipping), imprisonment, going without food and then being crucified.
- The Romans ensured that Jesus was dead by stabbing him with a lance. The separation of blood and water proved that death had occurred (Jn 19:34). [The heart is surrounded by the pericardium. This membrane contains serous matter resembling water, which prevents the surface of the heart from becoming dry. It was this which was pierced and from which the water flowed. The point of the spear also reached one of the ventricles of the heart, and the blood, yet warm, rushed forth, either mingled with or followed by the water of the pericardium, so as to appear to John to be blood and water flowing together.]¹⁰
- Multiple witnesses, including two members of the Sanhedrin (Joseph of Arimathea, Lk 23:50; Nicodemus, Jn 19:39), saw the dead body of Jesus taken from the Romans and placed into a stone cold tomb where it was sealed and guarded (Matt 27:64-66).
- The guards were the temple police set there by the chief priests (Matt 27:65-66). They had no interest in some conspiracy. In fact, as Roman soldiers their lives would normally be forfeit if they let a man escape. The priests advocated for them and paid them to lie that the body was stolen (Matt 28:11-15).
- Multiple witnesses saw the resurrected Jesus. This included individuals, groups of people and even 500 people at one time (1 Cor 15:5-7). The appearances continued over 40 days (Acts 1:3). Jesus was touched, ate food, walked along roads, appeared in secluded rooms and spoke to many followers.
- The chief priests wanted to terminate the Christian sect. The best way to do this was to produce the body of the dead Jesus. They could not do that. This was their worst nightmare (Matt 27:54).

In law, if there is enough circumstantial evidence, this is considered sufficient to convict a criminal. Here we have both circumstantial evidence and written witness statements. Judges (such as Lord Caldecote, Lord Chief Justice of England) have looked at the story of Jesus' resurrection and come to the conclusion that the evidence is sufficient to declare that it really took place.

The NT ... makes an overwhelming case ... as a matter of strict evidence, for the facts therein stated ... [including] the resurrection.

Lord Caldecote.

I know pretty well what evidence is, and I tell you such evidence as that for the resurrection has never broken down yet.

Lord Lyndhurst. [Lord Lyndhurst 1772–1863; English politician and lawyer; three times Lord Chancellor.]

I know of no one fact in the history of mankind which is proved by better and fuller evidence of every sort ... than Christ died and rose again from the dead.

Thomas Arnold. [Thomas Arnold 1795–1842; English historian and educator; Headmaster of Rugby School from 1828; father of Matthew Arnold.]

¹⁰ Sic. Albert Barnes.

The miracles of Jesus

Multiple atheistic academic works have been produced affirming that these miracles never took place. However, these have no scientific or historical basis because they rest on personal rational opinion.

The fact is that multitudes of people witnessed these miracles, people of all walks of life. Jesus' enemies did not dispute that the miracles occurred (how could they) and so they attacked him on legalistic grounds, such as healing on the Sabbath. So Jesus enemies and his supporters fully believed in these miracles.

When the Gospels were written and circulated there were many people alive who could have testified against the claim of miracles because they were eyewitnesses. This never happened.

Some of the Pharisees and Sadducees, who were generally opposed to Jesus for many reasons, became disciples of Jesus because of the miracles (Acts 6:7). They could not deny that he was the Son of God.

The claims of the miracles were so great that they became notorious beyond Judaea. Josephus, writing for the Romans where accuracy was important, could state, '*he was a doer of wonderful works*'. Even other religions have adopted Jesus as a god or prophet because of the miracles he performed, such as Islam or Hinduism.

The Bible proves itself to be true in every possible manner from cover to cover. It has been tested and still found to be true. It also claims to be the truth. If the miracles were a lie, then the whole Bible is discredited. It is not possible that the Bible should be absolutely true everywhere but then false in the supernatural aspects of four Gospels.

The Bible is historically inaccurate

Every time an academic has claimed this, the truth has come out and shamed the person. Over and over again the Bible has been denounced as fake history only for time to unravel a mystery and prove it to be true. In centuries the Bible has never been found to be historically inaccurate.

The Hittites

For example, for many years academics claimed that the Bible's mention of a Hittite Empire was false because nothing had been discovered at that time by archaeologists. The Bible was ridiculed for this. Some years later evidence of a Hittite Empire was discovered and today it is an accepted fact of history in the textbooks. In fact the Hittite language is now understood to be the oldest Indo-European language deciphered.

Archaeology

In early Victorian times, atheist archaeologists sought to prove the Bible wrong in their digs. Today, archaeologists search all they can for information from the Bible before they dig because it has never been proved wrong.

No archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference.

Nelson Glueck, (Jewish archaeologist), *Rivers in the desert; history of Negev*, p31, (1969).

There can be no doubt that archaeology has confirmed the substantial historicity of the Old Testament tradition.

William F Allbright, (archaeologist), *Archaeology and the religions of Israel*, p176 (1956).

No anachronisms

No anachronisms¹¹ have been found in the Bible. Indeed, there have been many things that the Bible affirmed which were initially believed to belong to a later period, but eventually the Bible was proved right and the sceptical scholars wrong. For a long time it was denied that writing existed in Moses' time and that the Pentateuch was written much later. Then Cuneiform script¹² was discovered showing that writing existed from very early times going back at least to 2,500 BC (Moses lived in the 13th century BC).

Accurate descriptions

When writing about culture the Bible is always accurate in its descriptions. When speaking of the vizier of the Assyrian king Sennacherib he is called the Rabshakeh (2 Kg 18:17-37). Other officials are also recorded correctly, namely the Tartan or field marshal (literally, 'commander in chief') and the Rabsaris or chief eunuch. When dealing with other nation's officials, different titles are used correctly. The lord of Egypt is called a Pharaoh and not a king. The chariot commanders of Syria are called a *sar* (1 Kg 22:31, trans. 'captains').

Implements are carefully named to be specific. When Peter cut off the ear of the high priests servant (Matt 26:51) he is said to have drawn a *machaira* or large knife, dagger or small sword. He would not have been concealing a large sword under his clothing. In other places a different sword is described, e.g. Rev 19:21. This is a *rhomphaia* or a Thracian, long, war sword usually worn in a sling over the shoulder.

Monuments and inscriptions

For many years academics stated that David and the United Monarchy never existed, or even that Israel never existed before Solomon. Then in 1993 archaeologists found hard evidence of David's existence at an ancient mound called Tel Dan in the north of Israel. The words, 'the House of David' and 'king of Israel' were carved in a chunk of basalt. In 2005 archaeologist Eilat Mazar found David's palace. She stated, '*What is amazing about the Bible is that very often we see that it is very accurate and sometimes amazingly accurate*'.¹³

The names of 29 kings are mentioned in the Bible which exactly correspond to monuments discovered. Every name is transliterated exactly as they appear on the monuments and the chronological order is correct.¹⁴

The Moabite Stone basalt monument absolutely confirms the OT's account of Mesha, king of Moab and his rebellion against Israel (2 Kg 3).

Other monuments have also confirmed Biblical accounts. These include: the Gezar Calendar, the Samaria Ostraca,¹⁵ the Siloam Inscription, the Assyrian king lists, the Lachish Letters plus Phoenician and Aramaic inscriptions.¹⁶ The inscriptions of Assyrian

¹¹ A thing belonging or appropriate to a period other than that in which it exists.

¹² A family of scripts, developed in the Middle East as a result of using split reeds for writing on soft clay. Incised free-hand signs were turned into groups of impressed triangles (cuneiform means wedge-shaped) by the Sumerians c.2500 BC. Thereafter it was adapted for other languages, including Akkadian and Assyrian. The forms were rigidly maintained, even when inscriptions were carved on stone. About 1500 BC in Persia, alphabets of cuneiform signs were invented, eventually to be replaced by derivatives of the Phoenician alphabet. [The Oxford World Encyclopaedia.]

¹³ Eilat Mazar, 'Using the Bible as her guide'.

¹⁴ See RD Wilson, 'A scientific investigation of the OT'.

¹⁵ Inscribed potsherds.

¹⁶ See James B Pritchard, 'Ancient Near Eastern texts relating to the OT', (1969).

kings Sargon II and Sennacherib detail the Assyrian sieges of Samaria (721 BC) and Jerusalem (701 BC). There are also inscriptions about Nebuchadnezzar's conquests of Jerusalem.

This should be sufficient to show that the Bible is unusually historically accurate, even in details.

The Bible has caused all wars

Although occasionally stated, this is just nonsense. Multiple wars had nothing to do with any religion let alone Christianity. Most wars are about territory, resources and power.

But there have been religious wars and also wars between Christian factions, such as the Schmalkaldic War (Lutherans versus Catholics) or the 30 Years War (Protestants versus Catholics in the Holy Roman Empire 1618-1648, although its continuance was really about the contest for European dominance between the Hapsburgs in Austria and Spain and the French House of Bourbon). The Crimean War was really based on religious issues.

However there are multiple factors to be considered here.

- The people starting these wars, and conducting them, need not have been genuine Christians. Many people are called 'Christian' for social reasons but are not regenerated people.
- Although some genuine Christians believe in the acceptability of a war for national self-defence, no Christian believes in a war of aggression.
- The Bible teaching is that even a war of self-defence is forbidden.
- The ethics commanded by Jesus in the New Covenant demand that Christians do not engage in any sort of violence. Indeed, Jesus commanded that we love our enemies and do good to them that hate us.
- War is completely contradictory to the Gospel of peace.
- Christians are citizens of heaven and have no real stake in this world. There is no need to engage in national disputes.

Wars involving the Christian religion have always been initiated by men for reasons of greed and power and merely using the claims of religion as an excuse. They have nothing to do with real Christianity.

The Bible is full of discrepancies

This is a stale old criticism repeated for centuries. Despite the claim, no one has ever successfully proved the accusation. Good scholarship, in answering these claims, has showed that intelligent research demonstrates that the claims are false and the Bible is 100% accurate. There are many books devoted just to this topic alone. Perhaps the most famous is John W Hailey's *'Alleged discrepancies of the Bible'*.

We cannot analyse this large subject here but the claimed discrepancies involve personal names, titles, place names, regnal years and so on. Every apparent discrepancy has a good explanation.

For example,

God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. *His* brightness

was like the light; He had rays *flashing* from His hand, and there His power *was* hidden. Habb 3:3-4

And he said: 'The LORD came from Sinai, and dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, and He came with ten thousands of saints; from His right hand *came* a fiery law for them'. Deut 33:2

LORD, when You went out from Seir, when You marched from the field of Edom, the earth trembled and the heavens poured, the clouds also poured water; the mountains gushed before the LORD, this Sinai, before the LORD God of Israel. Jud 5:4-5

What on Earth does this mean? It refers to the visible display of the glory of God when he gave the law upon Mount Sinai. If it refers to the revelation of his glory to Moses, why is Teman, Seir or Paran mentioned?¹⁷

Teman was a town and a district in Southern Idumea, the land of 'the sons of the east', frequently mentioned in the OT. It was divided from the hills of Paran by the low plain of Arabah (Hab 3:3). Instead of Seir, the poetical name of the mountainous country of the Edomites, Teman, the southern district of Edomitish land, is used as synecdoche¹⁸ for Idumaea generally, as in Obad 1:9 and Amos 1:12.

These references also speak of the boundaries of the wanderings of the Israelites.

- The Israelites came to Mount Sinai through the valley, now called Wady Feiran or Paran; the country south of Judea and near Edom, where Mount Paran was situated.
- Paran is the desert region, extending from the south of Judah to Sinai. Equals 'the desert of Sin'.
- Seir, Sinai, and Paran are adjacent to one another, and are hence associated together, in respect to God's giving of the law (Deut 33:2).
- Teman means 'south'. Mount Paran was situated to the south of the land of Canaan.
- Teman is identified with Seir or Edom, as here substituted for it. It was a city in the land of Edom (Jer 49:7) five miles from Petra, in Idumea, where Mount Seir was also situated.
- Edom was the boundary of the wanderings to their promised land (Num 20:14-20; Deut 2).
- Between Paran and Edom or Teman was the gift of the Spirit to the seventy, which was the shadow of the day of Pentecost; there, was the brass serpent lifted up, the picture of the healing of the Cross.

The splendour of the divine appearance spread over Teman and the mountains of Paran, so that the rays were reflected from the two mountainous regions. People at a distance saw the cloud and fire on the top of Mount Sinai, and praised the God of Israel.

Using 'Seir', 'Teman' and 'Paran' is a poetic device to speak of the same general area where the glory of God shone forth.

¹⁷ I acknowledge assistance from multiple commentaries, including: Barnes, Henry, Keil and Delitzsch, JFB, Gill, Clarke etc.

¹⁸ A figure of speech in which a part is made to represent the whole or vice versa, as in *England lost by six wickets* (meaning 'the English cricket team'). [New Oxford Dict.]

There are no discrepancies here. The different names are poetic devices to make a point.

The Bible is scientifically unsound

Again, this claim has been raised many times and has always been proved to be false. Everywhere the Bible speaks about an issue that can be scientifically assessed it has been shown to be accurate. Indeed, the Bible has affirmed certain matters centuries before science formally proved them.

One example is that in an age where everyone believed that the Earth was flat the Bible affirmed that the Earth was round.

It is He who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers, who stretches out the heavens like a curtain, and spreads them out like a tent to dwell in. Isa 40:22

Compare this to the Qu'ran which states that the sun disappears at night in a muddy pool;¹⁹ or Hinduism which avers that the Earth is flat and is supported by three elephants on a turtle (*Akupara*).²⁰

The dietary laws laid down for the Israelites are another example. These comply with what modern nutritionists know to be a healthy diet. Indeed, in ancient times before refrigerators the forbidden foods, including pork, make sense.

The hygiene laws are another example of something entirely in keeping with modern medical knowledge. Many of these were not being practised as late as Victorian urban society, hence the prevalent diseases.

The Bible explains that the planet was covered in water until the Earth was formed above and within these waters (Gen 1:2 with Gen 1:9-10). It also refers to the 'fountains of the deep' (Gen 7:11) that were released, along with the rain, to create a global flood. This idea of oceans under the Earth was ridiculed for years until recent science, using new technology, has discovered vast underground lakes that contain more water than all the surface oceans. Again the Bible was proved scientifically correct about something no man could observe.

The text of the Bible is not authentic

There is no written work on Earth that has been subjected to more scrutiny regarding source texts than the Bible. It is odd that people fully accept many ancient documents, such as Homer's *Odyssey*, Julius Caesar's *Gallic War*, or Thucydides'²¹ *History of the Peloponnesian War*, which have far fewer extant textual sources than the Bible.

The Old Testament

The authenticity of the OT is now fully accepted as the work of the Massorettes²² and the accuracy of ancient scribes is now understood. Copies were meticulously and carefully

¹⁹ Qu'ran, Sura 18:83-91. Hadith, al-Zamakhshari, 'The Katshaf'; al-Badawi, 'the lights of revelation'.

²⁰ According to some sources, disputed by others.

²¹ Thucydides [c.455–c.400 BC] a Greek historian.

²² The Jewish scholars of the 6th to 10th centuries ad who contributed to the establishment of a recognised text of the Hebrew Bible.

made and scrutinised by senior scribes to the finest degree. No one really doubts that what we have is a faithful copy of the original autographs.

We also have the Greek version of the OT (the ‘Septuagint’ or LXX) compiled in Alexandria for Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt in the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC which was adopted by the early Christian Churches. Although there are minor variations it generally supports the Hebrew text. Many OT quotes in the NT are from the LXX.

NT manuscripts

More extant mss.

Regarding the NT, there are more extant source texts than any other historical work. There are over 5,000 Greek manuscripts, over 9,000 other early versions, over 10,000 Latin Vulgate manuscripts and over 24,000 portions of the Greek NT. The second best attested historical work is Homer’s *Iliad* that only has 643 extant manuscripts. Caesar’s *Gallic Wars* has less than ten good manuscripts.

Mss. close to the source

In addition we have Greek texts closer to the original manuscripts in date than any ancient work. The oldest complete text of Homer dates from the 13th century. The *Iliad* was written in 900 BC but the earliest fragments date from 400 BC, 500 years later.

There are multiple fragments of the NT that are very close in date to the original writing. Such as:

Manuscript	Date
John Rylands ms.	125 AD. A portion of John which was written about 95 AD.
Bodmer Papyrus II.	150 AD. Most of John.
The Diatessaron of Tatian.	160 AD. A harmony of the Gospels.
Chester Beatty Papyri.	200 AD. Three of these contain major portions of the NT.

Careful copying

Again, monks were closely scrutinised when they copied older manuscripts to ensure accuracy, burning the older, worn out manuscripts to avoid confusion. The task was considered as working on the word of God that demanded the utmost care.

The language

The subtleties of the language used, *Koine* common Greek and not classical poetic Greek, is now understood and comparison with technical, tax and accounting documents allows us a good understanding of the vocabulary used.

Other NT versions and quotations

Furthermore, other language versions,²³ commentaries, church histories²⁴ and church documents²⁵ fully support the Greek text that is accepted. There are many witnesses to the truth.

²³ E.g. the Syriac *Peshitta*, or the Ethiopic, or the Slavic.

²⁴ E.g. Eusebius’ [c.264–c.340 AD] ‘Ecclesiastical History’.

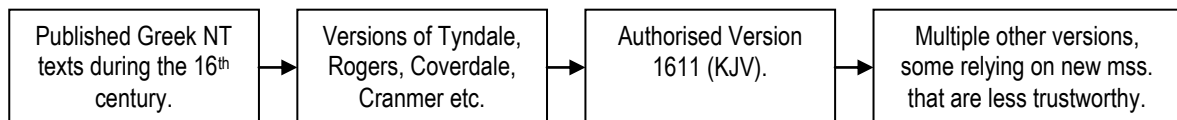
²⁵ E.g. letters from church leaders, quotes in creeds, quotes in hymns etc.

Transmission

For centuries the version of the Bible that was available to churches was the Latin Vulgate made by Jerome in the 4th century (405 AD). It differs from earlier Latin versions in that Jerome translated the Old Testament from Hebrew rather than Greek ensuring more accuracy. However, it had its minor flaws.

Over time more Greek manuscripts were discovered so that later scholars had access to better information, especially on certain books such as Revelation or the letters of Peter. Even so, this was only a matter of fine detail; there was no major change in doctrinal issues.

During the Reformation very good Greek texts of the NT were published, such as by Erasmus [c.1469–1536]²⁶ and Theodore Beza [1519-1605],²⁷ which became the basis of sound English translations. By the time of William Tyndale [c.1494–1536] there was an excellent resource of extant manuscripts allowing an accurate English translation in great detail in 1525-35. Tyndale's work became the source of the English Authorised Version (KJV) in 1611. Versions made since then have not radically changed anything significant; in fact some would affirm that many have muddied the water. Worse, some discoveries have certainly been forgeries that have marred modern translations.



Conclusion

Without a long and technical overview, it is safe to say that the OT and NT can be trusted as authentic, that is, accurate copies of the original manuscripts, more than any ancient historical work.

Conclusion

No matter what the target subject, the Bible has successfully resisted all the claims of fraud for century after century. It has been attacked by all sorts of people on all sorts of issues and yet every attack has utterly failed. The Bible is trustworthy.

Resources

These are just basic suggestions; there are thousands of works in each category.

General

For a general discussion of issues relating to specific texts consult a good commentary. I have listed good ones in previous papers; too many to list here. As a basic start download E-Sword and use: Barnes' notes; Jamieson Fausset and Brown (abridged version); Adam Clarke; John Gill; Keil and Delitzsch; Robertson's Word Pictures; Vincent's Word Studies; Matthew Henry.

²⁶ Greek edition of the New Testament in 1516, followed by a Latin translation. Note the timing, just before the Reformation began in 1517.

²⁷ Greek NT editions of 1565, 1582, 1589.

Background issues

For background issues, such as culture, social issues, customs, geography etc. consult a good Bible dictionary, handbook or book of background.

Handbook: John Stott *Understanding the Bible*; Unger's *Bible Handbook*; *The Lion Handbook of the Bible*; Baker's *Pictorial Introduction to the Bible*; Baker's *handbook of Bible lists*; Manley *The New Bible Handbook*; Angus *The Bible Handbook*.

Customs: *Illustrated Dictionary of Manners and Customs*; Barquet *Everyday Life in NT Times*; De Vaux *Ancient Israel, Its Life & Institutions*; Edersheim *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*; Freeman *Manners & Customs of the Bible*.

Bible dictionaries

Bible dictionaries include: William Smith *Dictionary of the Bible* (1863);²⁸ James Hastings *Dictionary of the Bible*; John D Davis, revised by HS Gehman *The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*; *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*; *Fausset's Bible Dictionary*; *Easton's Bible Dictionary*; Baker's *Illustrated Dictionary of the Bible*; Unger's *Dictionary of the Bible*; *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopaedia*; the *Lion Encyclopaedia of the Bible*.

E-Sword has a number of free Bible dictionaries, including some of the above.

King lists

For regnal timing problems see Thiele's *The mysterious numbers of the Hebrew Kings*.

Discrepancies

For a general analysis of claimed discrepancies see: John W Hailey, 'Alleged discrepancies of the Bible' (1874); George Sexton, *Biblical difficulties dispelled* (1885).

Apologetics

For general research on textual matters, history, etc., consult apologetic works. E.g. Josh McDowell, *Evidence that demands a verdict* (volume 1 and 2); Frank Morison *Who Moved the Stone*; Henry Morris *Many Infallible Proofs*; Ron Rhodes *The Complete Book of Bible Answers*; Kreeft and Tacelli, *Handbook of Christian apologetics*.

For research studies on multiple apologetic issues see Arthur Custance, *The Doorway papers* (multiple volumes).

Scientific issues

For scientific issues, such as discussion about the global flood, see books discussing evolutionary theory. There are many of these, such as books by Henry Morris.

Biblical history

For historical questions see: FF Bruce *Israel and the Nations*; Davis & Whitcomb *History of Israel*; Merrill *A Kingdom of Priests*; Wood *Survey of Israel's History*; Wood, *Israel's United Monarchy*; Edersheim *OT Bible History*. Many others (e.g. Bright) used as seminary textbooks are tainted by liberalism.

Hermeneutics

Regarding matters of interpretation see: Berkhof *Principles of Interpretation*; Pink *Interpretation of the Scriptures*; Carson *Exegetical Fallacies*; Terry *Bible Hermeneutics*; Bullinger *Figures of Speech used in the Bible*.

²⁸ The original is three large volumes that are mostly good (poor on the Tabernacle); but you can only find the one volume abridged version of E-Sword.

Textual matters, transmission and the canon

This is an extremely complex technical subject and works on this can be prolix. More simple introductions include: J Harold Greenlee, *Introduction to NT textual criticism*; FF Bruce, *The canon of Scripture*; Carsten Peter Thiede, *The earliest Gospel manuscripts*; Bruce M Metzger, *The text of the NT*. FF Bruce, *The NT documents*; Christopher Hill, *The English Bible*; Peter S Ruckman, *The Christian's handbook of manuscript evidence*; Geddes MacGregor, *The Bible in the making*. Sir Frederick Kenyon, *The story of the Bible*.

Greek language issues

Multiple lexicons and resources, including: *Vincent's Word Studies*, *Robertson's Word Pictures*, *Vine's Expository Dictionary*; Bullinger's *Critical Lexicon and Concordance*, *Thayer's Greek lexicon*; *Friberg Greek Lexicon*; *Louw-Nida Greek lexicon*; Bauer's *Greek-English lexicon*; Trench, *Synonyms of the NT*; Earle, *Word meanings in the NT*; *Analytical Greek lexicon*; various Greek-English interlinears.

In addition I have multiple papers on all these subjects.

Scripture quotations are from The New King James Version

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