

# WHERE DID THE BIBLE COME FROM? (PART I)

## Can we really trust the Bible?

- this is one of the major “defeaters” in our culture

### ***The Da Vinci Code by Dan Brown***

The Bible is a product of man. Not of God. Man created it as a historical record of tumultuous times, and it has evolved through countless translations, additions, and revisions. History has never had a definitive version of the book. More than eighty gospels were considered for the New Testament, and yet only a relative few were chosen for inclusion – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John among them.

The Bible, as we know it today, was collated by the pagan Roman emperor Constantine the Great. Constantine needed to strengthen the new Christian tradition, and held a famous ecumenical gathering known as the Council of Nicaea. At Nicaea, Constantine commissioned and financed a new Bible, which omitted those gospels that spoke of Christ’s human traits and embellished those gospels that made him godlike. The earlier gospels were outlawed, gathered up, and burned. These scrolls highlight glaring historical discrepancies and fabrications, clearly confirming that the modern Bible was compiled and edited by men who possessed a political agenda – to promote the divinity of the man Jesus Christ and use his influence to solidify their own power base.

### ***Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths***

#### ***We Never Knew by Bart Ehrman***

Someone decided that four of these early Gospels, and no others, should be accepted as part of the canon – the collection of sacred books of Scripture. But how did they make their decisions? When? How can we be sure they were right? And whatever happened to the other books? Only twenty-seven of the early Christian books were finally included in “the canon.” Other books came to be rejected, scorned, maligned, attacked, burned, all but forgotten – lost.

The truth is that *one form* of Christianity emerged as victorious from the conflicts of the second and third centuries. This one form of Christianity decided what was the “correct” Christian perspective; it decided who could exercise authority over Christian belief and practice; and it determined what forms of Christianity would be marginalized, set aside, destroyed. It also decided which books to canonize into Scripture and which books to set aside as “heretical,” teaching false ideas.

## What is the canon?

- so how did we get the New Testament as 27 books?
- doesn’t this suggest that the Bible is the product of man, not God?
- how do we know the canon is closed?

## Christianity is uniquely dependent on Scripture

### (a) Jesus held the highest view of Scripture

#### **Mark 12:26-27**

<sup>26</sup> “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

<sup>27</sup> He is not God of the dead, but of the living. You are quite wrong.

#### **John 10:35**

Scripture cannot be broken

### (b) History uniquely matters in Christianity

- Christianity is not set of ethical teachings but a *historical claim*
- it is historical falsifiable so accuracy matters

#### **Acts 10:39-42**

<sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

## Some false solutions

- we can trust Roman Catholic Church, who determined the canon
- problem: (a) requires an infallible church  
(b) human beings decided what is God’s word
- “a burning in the bosom” – the Mormon apologetic
- problem: (a) subjectivity and (b) validates different texts

## **We can trust the Bible because *the Bible attests to itself***

- it is “self-authenticating” | it’s own witness
- the Bible tells us it is the Word of God

### **1 Thessalonians 2:13**

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

### **2 Timothy 3:16**

All Scripture is breathed out by God

## **But that’s circular reasoning!**

- but it must necessarily be so since all ultimate realities are circular
- for example: *how do you prove logic?* or *how trust senses?*
- God and his Word is ultimate therefore we cannot sit judgment over it

### **Mark 13:31**

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

## **This argument doesn’t work with other documents**

- “I am Constitution of US” or “I am world’s best cookbook”
- but Bible is unique because it is God’s self-disclosure and thus cannot be subject to a higher authority

### **Hebrews 6:13**

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself.

## **Just as with God, we don’t “prove God,” we receive his Word**

## **But self-authenticating doesn’t mean self-contained**

- because what if any book said, “I am God speaking!”?
- there are evidences confirm that it is God speaking just like the Resurrection supported Jesus’ self-claim
- we can verify the claim against reality

## **The Bible I Notes**

### **Can we really trust the Bible?**

- this is one of the major “defeaters” against Christianity in our culture
- reason to disbelieve Christianity without really looking into it

### **Read *Da Vinci Code* and *Ehrman* quotes**

#### **What is *the canon*?**

- Greek – “rule” | *authoritative list of books* – Word of God (Scriptures)
- New Testament writings were each independent of another – individual books

#### **So how did we get the “New Testament” – a *bound set of 27 books*?**

- if you look in modern Bible – Table of Contents | but nowhere within Scriptures do find equivalent
- in fact, earliest list comes “Muratorian fragment” which dates 2<sup>nd</sup> century and is missing Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter | also mention books not canonical (Shepherd of Hermes)
- not until 4<sup>th</sup> century do you have consensus on our 27 books
- criticism – canon arose out of theological struggles, in which each camp had their books and the winning side, what is now known as orthodoxy, basically got decide canon
- if criticism is true, then the Bible is really the result of man, not divine writings

#### **And how do we know canon is *closed*?**

- nowhere in New Testament do you see explicit statement, these 27 books are it and no more
- so why can't it be open? (like Mormons) | where did we get this idea that it's closed?

#### **Part of problem, we've done *poor job of explaining* how we got the Bible**

- assume Bible came directly from God and don't talk about its human origins
- Bible is not like Quran or Book of Mormon – single author, single text, but compilation of various authors
- so that when people find out about history and background, get disturbed and scandalized

#### **This plants a *fundamental doubt* in our minds**

- “did God really say?” was Satan's temptation in garden

#### **The Bible is not incidental to Christian faith, but foundational**

- within Bible itself, it has highest view possible for the biblical text
- Deuteronomy 8:3 – “man shall not live by bread alone but by every word comes mouth of God”
- God's word is foundational for life | so this question must be settled

## Christianity is uniquely dependent on Scripture

### (a) Jesus held the highest view of Scripture

#### Mark 12:26-27

<sup>26</sup> “I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

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#### Jesus is quoting from Exodus 3:6, where God revealed himself to Moses

- what’s remarkable is that Jesus’ proof of the resurrection rests, not only on a single word, but on *the tense of that word*
- not “I was the God of Abraham...” but “I am the God of Abraham”
- meaning, even the smallest detail of Scripture is authoritative and divinely inspired
- so we can’t say, “oh, what matters is the general gist or the main thrust”
- no, Jesus upholds the highest possible view

#### Sermon on Mount

“Not an *iota*, not a *dot* will pass from the law until all is accomplished”

#### Jesus was constantly quoting Scripture

- arguably, everything he said was either a quote or an allusion to OT Scripture
- he was constantly letting Scripture dictate every detail of his life
- for example: in triumphal entry, he instructed disciples get “colt of donkey”
- why? in order to fulfill prophesied in Zechariah 9:9

#### John 10:35

Scripture cannot be broken

#### Jesus held highest view possible for Scripture

- every single word of Scripture is true and reliable and cannot be dismissed

### (b) History uniquely matters in Christianity

- Christianity is not set of ethical teachings but a *historical claim* | Jesus of Nazareth crucified and resurrected
- Christianity is historical falsifiable, so historical accuracy matters in Scripture
- if you can demonstrate that Scripture has historical errors, I don’t think Christianity can stand

#### Acts 10:39-42 – Peter with Cornelius

<sup>39</sup> And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, <sup>40</sup> but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, <sup>41</sup> not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. <sup>42</sup> And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

#### So that if the Bible has *shoddy history*, if fanciful account – then Christianity is untrue

- because it’s not a religion of ethics, but it’s a declaration of something happened in history

## Some false solutions:

### (1) We can trust *Roman Catholic Church*, who determined the canon

- rather than see the formation of the Bible seemingly dependent on the vagaries of history and chance, we can rest assured that God *vested the Church with authority* to shift through various competing texts and determine which books are from God
- after all, the church existed before the New Testament was written

#### Problem:

##### (a) Requires an *infallible church*

- first, did God really vest his church with authority to determine what is Word of God?
- second, wouldn't that require God-like powers for the church? (infallibility)
- in fact, we know church is deeply flawed and very much fallible

##### (b) That means, *human beings decide what is God's word*

- rather than Scripture defining us, we define Scripture
- then God is really figment of our imagination, we make God in our image

### (2) "A burning in the bosom" – the Mormon apologetic

- the truth of Book of Mormon is established by feelings of peace and joy when read it

#### Problem:

##### (a) subjectivity

- emotion-based response with little to no connection to text itself | nothing to do with validity of text
- God's word unreliably depends on moods and feelings

##### (b) feelings can validate different texts

- every sacred text can claim to pass this test, including the Book of Mormon!

## But doesn't the Bible make a *similar appeal*?

### 1 Corinthians 2:10-11

<sup>10</sup>These things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. <sup>11</sup>For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

## Not saying that Spirit makes people see *flimsy text* as Word of God

- but rather, people in their sinful, rebellious hearts, reject Bible (even though plainly the truth)
- so the Spirit is necessary to open the heart and mind to the truth – like lamp shining on text
- but the Bible stands on its merits
- not our emotional experience of the Bible validates or affirms Bible
- it is the inherent divine qualities of the Bible that establish it

### **So what's *the answer*?**

- first, answer I'm going to give is going to take 3 weeks – I hope you'll stay for that
- second, today, I'm going to start laying down foundation | it's necessary but *not very satisfying*
- best answer (talk about next two weeks) – we can trust the Bible because Jesus validates the Bible
- but objection people inevitably have – “everything you know about Jesus is from the Bible”

### **We can trust the Bible because the Bible *attests to itself***

- it is “self-authenticating” | it testifies to itself; it is its own witness
- the Bible tells us it is the Word of God

#### **1 Thessalonians 2:13**

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

#### **2 Timothy 3:16**

All Scripture is breathed out by God.

### **The Bible never establishes its credentials by *appealing to an outside authority*, but always on its own authority**

- the Bible is not built on any foundation other than itself

### **But that's *circular reasoning*!**

- you're assuming the very thing you're trying to prove!
- example: like going to doctor and saying, “I can't be sick because I'm healthy person”

### **Typically, circular reasoning is bad because premise is so *unsubstantiated***

- “I can't be sick because I'm a healthy person”
- but is premise correct? in fact, all evidence points otherwise
- your personal opinion doesn't have greater weight than results of physical
  
- so a much better argument – “my other test results say I'm healthy!”
- appealing to an authority higher than your mere opinion
- but you can't just say, “I'm healthy because I say so.”

### **But here's problem – what *authority* do you appeal to for the Bible?**

- what has greater weight than God's own word?
  - closely matches with historical records (but depends on how read data)
  - describes spiritual state of man
- and whatever you appeal to, you are elevating that above the Bible
- ends up being based on consensus among experts
  - I think this is why lot of people get disturbed when take college classes, see all skeptical scholarship

**But circular logic is not always bad – exception, dealing with *ultimate, foundational realities***

- example: logic itself | you don't prove logic, you assume it
- in assuming logic, the premise proves itself to be sound, because never been contradicted
- but you don't start by putting "logic" on judgment seat, to be tested and proved
- you start by assuming logic is true and then realize that it proves itself reliable and truth-worthy
  
- another example: your senses | how can you trust your senses?
- how do you not know, right now, you're in the Matrix? or brain is in a vat, getting stimuli?
- my favorite version: solipsism (how do you know not only person in world?)
  
- you can't prove it without appealing to your senses | Rene Descartes
- part of answer, radical skepticism means you can't know anything
- other part of answer, same with logic, deepest ultimate reality is God (who is logical and non-deceptive)

**So we must *start by assuming Bible is God's Word***

**Mark 13:31**

Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

**This argument doesn't work with *other kinds of documents***

- "I am Constitution of US" or "I am world's best cookbook"
- all other kinds of books are derivative, meaning are authenticated by external means

**The Bible is *only book that authenticates itself***

- reason is because only God can authenticate his own word
- otherwise, he would not be God, but a lesser being to whatever authenticates him
- therefore, God authenticates himself

**Hebrews 6:13**

For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself.

**In other words, we treat God's Word *like we treat God***

- we don't prove his existence, we accept/receive his reality
- Anselm – "faith seeking understanding"

**But self-authenticating doesn't mean *self-contained***

- because any book could claim it is God's Word
- how is the Bible different from Quran or Book of Mormon?

**Strength of self-attestation depends on *how large the circle is***

- small circle is bad because it doesn't allow for contradiction with other data
- but the Bible's self-attestation is a very large circle, that provides a great deal of evidence and data
- just like Resurrection (historical fact with eye-witnesses) supports Jesus' self-claim to be Messiah

**So concerning *other claims***

- Book of Mormon contradicts the Bible – theology and closed canon
- Quran likewise contradicts the Bible
- interesting in both cases, they claim the Bible is corrupt and error-filled – they would have to

**So for Bible, its claim is substantiated by *the life and ministry of Jesus***

- first, he affirms the Old Testament as the Word of God
- second, he provided instructions for the writing of the New Testament

***Models of authentication for the Bible***

