

The Inspiration and Authority

of

Scripture

By

David W. Holden

# The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture

## Outline

- Its inspiration.
- human agents.
- Scripture authenticated. God speaks to Moses. Page 1.
- The foundational events of the false religions. p. 2. ([Go](#))
- Attack on Scripture from Julius Wellhausen and Darwinism. p. 3 ([Go](#))
- The Bible College movement. p. 4 ([Go](#))
- The Exodus population. p. 4 ([Go](#))
- The Hebrew word 'Eleph'. p. 5 ([Go](#))
- A Mathematical Argument. p. 6 ([Go](#))
- Attack from atheists. p. 7 ([Go](#))
- God fights for Israel. p. 8 ([Go](#))
- Subjectivism. p. 9 ([Go](#))
- Lessons from German history. p. 10 ([Go](#))
- The message of the Bible. p. 11 ([Go](#))
- Key passages on the authority of Scripture. p. 12 ([Go](#))
- End Notes ([Go](#))

Go

For those reading a hard copy of this paper, please ignore the word 'Go' which applies to the digital version.

### **Its inspiration**

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Also; 2 Pe. 1:19-21, Rev. 22:18-19.

### **A doctrinal statement on Scripture:**

“The Bible is the Word of God. It is inspired and inerrant in its original autographs. It is a complete and final revelation of God.”

### **The correct direction**

Some years back, I watched a documentary regarding an aircraft which lost its navigation system while on a long flight in the hours of darkness in north Africa in about the 1950s. The option to land at a small airport was rejected in favour of continuing to their intended destination. The navigator set the course as best he could and was confident that when the sun rose, they would see land marks close to where they needed to land. When the first rays of the sun appeared above the horizon, the cabin crew were shocked. The sun was not supposed to rise in the direction of the port side of the aircraft. They had been travelling most of the night in the wrong direction!

The mistake had serious consequences. They corrected their course, but ran out of fuel and crash-landed in the desert. The copilot died because of a severe bump to the head, and the others suffered much hardship before they were finally rescued. For those who take the wrong course in spiritual matters, the consequences are far more serious. The question regarding the trustworthiness of the Bible is not something that can be ignored. We will now look at how God’s Word came to us and why it can be trusted.

### **Its human agents**

God worked through men who wrote down what they were inspired by God to write, but not in such a way as to obliterate the natural writing style of the author. This becomes more obvious when reading scripture in the original language. Paul was a scholar and Peter a fisherman. Those facts are reflected in their different writing styles.

The use of human agents does not diminish the authority of scripture. Lets put this in military terms. A high-ranking military officer gives an order. It is typed out by a low ranking person, and then distributed by people of low rank. Then, when for instance, a Sergeant presents the order to men under his command, they obey the order as not coming from the Sergeant, but as coming directly from the high-ranking officer. Likewise, we obey scripture, because it comes from God.

### **Scripture authenticated**

Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible, known collectively as the Pentateuch. He wrote about himself in the third person as did Julius Caesar when he mentioned himself in the memoirs of his military campaigns. God presented Moses to the people with spectacular signs and wonders. He

did this because Moses is the first author of the Bible, and therefore, Moses is foundational to all sixty-six books of the Bible.

“The LORD said to Moses, ‘I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you....’” (Exodus 19:9).

The people consecrated themselves for two days, then “On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled. Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him.” (Exodus 19:16-19).

God spoke very loudly. We learn from the book of Hebrews, “At that time his voice shook the earth,...” (Heb. 12:26). Not surprisingly, “Everyone in the camp trembled” (Ex. 19:16).

In addition to the above testimony, God did something very special with Moses; he made his face radiant.

“When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, he was not aware that his face was radiant because he had spoken with the LORD. When Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, his face was radiant, and they were afraid to come near him.” (Exodus 34:29-30). Also in another spot we read, “But whenever he entered the Lord’s presence to speak with him, he removed the veil until he came out. And when he came out and told the Israelites what he had been commanded, they saw that his face was radiant. ...” (Exodus 34:34-35a). Quite clearly, the Israelites would need to be wilfully rebellious against God to ignore what Moses said and wrote. Moses did not need to rely on oral tradition to know what was said in the verbal communication between God and Adam. He was informed directly by God. We should not be surprised by this direct communication with Moses. The **apostle Paul** did not learn the gospel message from other men, he was taught through a special revelation of Jesus Christ. Paul states, “I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ.” (Galatians 1:1-12).

We know that the apostle Paul can be trusted because of what God did through him, “God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them.” (Acts 19:11-12).

### **The tent of meeting**

The Bible informs us that “... Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the ‘tent of meeting’. ... As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses.” (Exodus 33:7).

“The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man

speaks with his friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young assistant Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.” (Ex. 33:11).

The tent may have had a partition, so that God spoke with Moses on one side, while Joshua was on the other side, even so, Joshua would have heard everything that God told Moses. This is important because he could testify to the people that the message from God to Moses was true, furthermore, he had the role of carrying the message on after Moses died.

Lets summarise some important points

- The pillar of cloud bears witness (Ex. 33:7).
- The voice of God speaking from Mt. Sinai to the whole nation of Israel bears witness (Exodus 19:9,19).
- Moses bears witness through a face to face encounter with God (Ex 33:11).
- The radiant face of Moses bears witness (Ex. 34:35).
- Joshua son of Nun bears witness (Ex. 33:11).

### The foundational events of false religions

#### Hinduism

Hinduism has no supernatural foundational event which it can point to. Furthermore, it has no clear set body of truth. The Hindu can believe in a handful of gods, or a thousand gods.

#### Buddhism

The founder of Buddhism is Siddharta **Gautama** (563-483 BC) the Buddah (Buddha is a title meaning ‘enlightened one’) he sat under a tree and allegedly received a revelation. There was no spectacular sign, just a man sitting under a tree. Furthermore, there was not much to see because the thoughts that came to his mind did so during the hours of darkness.

#### Islam

**Mohammed** (c. 570-632 AD), is the founder of **Islam** or Mohammedism as it was often called in its early days. He sat in a cave in a state of meditation at night on Mt Hira where he received thoughts that greatly alarmed him. He thought he was being attacked by a Jinn (evil spirit). Several books speak of the fear he experienced regarding his mental state, including, “*The First Muslim*” by Lesley Hazleton (see page 19 of his book).<sup>1</sup> Mohammed spoke to his wife (Khadija) about the matter. She convinced him with the help of her aged cousin, Waraqah ibn Nawfal that the thoughts were from God and that he should go back for more. By Christian standards, or even by secular western standards, women are treated badly by Islam, but where would Islam be without the actions of this woman? Clearly, Khadija (who was senior to Mohamed in age and financial standing) is foundational to Islam. She has a place of authority in the matter, even though she is not an eye witness to what took place!

No spectacular signs and wonders accompanied Mohammed’s experience on the mountain. The Bible is the only book to be founded with powerful signs and wonders from God.

#### Atheism

Atheism is the belief that there is no God. Atheism is a religion because it has a set of beliefs, and will at times persecute those who do not hold to the beliefs. The universe got here because of what is loosely termed the ‘Big Bang’. The sun, and the earth came into existence because of random chance events. Furthermore, the earth is teeming with life because of random chance events. The atheist must accept the above points on blind faith. No person heard or saw the ‘big bang’, and no scientist has been able to create life. Given that the atheist must believe his brain is based on an *accidental* arrangement of the genetic code. Logically speaking, he can’t be sure of anything! His belief destroys the value of his thinking process. In reality, the atheist can be sure of many things because it was God who created his brain. He doesn’t believe because of a sin/moral problem. Consequently, he suppresses the truth (Romans 1:18-19). The many problems of atheism are dealt with in my paper, “*Can The Theory of Evolution Survive The Attack of Science?*”

The powerful work of God on Mt Sinai in support of Moses was witnessed by a whole nation, numbering at least in the tens of thousands. Even though the Scriptures have that great testimony, they have an even greater testimony.

#### Authenticated by Jesus

Jesus walked this earth as one who is fully God and fully man. It was in his authoritative position as God and man that he made the statement, “... your word is truth” (John 17:17). God bore testimony to the fact that Jesus is his Son, by raising him from the dead “... who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.” (Romans 1:4).

Scripture has two powerful witnesses that it is from God. At the beginning, it has the powerful testimony of the signs and wonders given by God to the whole nation of Israel on Mt Sinai. At the end of the Old Testament, and at the beginning of the new, we have the statement from Jesus who was raised from the dead that God’s word ‘*is truth*’.

Some might wonder about the many authors of the Bible who had no spectacular signs accompanying their ministry. So I will explain what happens when I go on a bus trip. I want the brakes to be in good order, however, I don’t need to personally check the brakes. I only need to trust the reputation of the bus company to be assured that the brakes are in good order. Similarly, I don’t need to check every man who penned the words of God to know that what is stated is true. I only need to trust one man, the holy righteous Son of God - Jesus Christ - and that is sufficient. He states “Your Word is truth” (John 17:17). He says it; and I believe it.

For the moment, lets summarise the above.

- God spoke with Moses and great signs accompanied the event.
- God the Father spoke through Jesus. The Father authenticated everything Jesus did and said by performing great miracles through him, and by raising him from the dead. This Jesus testified to the truthfulness

of Scripture. By contrast:

- Mohammed sat in a cave. No loud voice from God and no spectacular sign accompanied this foundational event for Islam.
- Buddha sat under a tree. No loud voice from God and no spectacular sign accompanied this foundational event for Buddhism. In fact, none of the false religions of this world can point to an event which even remotely matches that which took place between God and Moses.

### Scripture is self-authenticating

Scripture is not reliant upon the opinions of men or any branch of science to be validated. The fulfilment of statements from God's prophets regarding the future - from their point in time - show that they were inspired of God. For instance, it was predicted that Jesus would go quietly to his death like a lamb to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7) which is exactly what happened. Furthermore, the Scriptures predicted what would happen to the garments of Jesus after his crucifixion. "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." (Psalm 22:18). The soldiers fulfilled that prophecy when they said, "'Let's not tear it,' they said to one another. 'Let's decide by lot who will get it.' This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said, 'They divided my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing.' So this is what the soldiers did.'" (John 19:24). For more information on the fulfilment of Scripture, see my paper, *The Witness Of Prophecy*, a free download from:

[www.defenceofthefaith.org](http://www.defenceofthefaith.org)

### Scripture endures

- Jesus states, "I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished." (Matt. 5:18).
- "It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law." (Luke 16:17).
- "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (Luke 21:33).
- "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands for ever." (Isaiah 40:8).

### False teaching

Jesus warned the disciples to be on guard against false teaching. In his day, the main threat came from the Pharisees and Sadducees. He said, "... be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees." (Matt. 16:11-12). The truth of the Bible has been attacked many times and rebutted. One major attack came at the end of the nineteenth century from a man named Julius Wellhausen.

### Julius Wellhausen (1844 - 1918)

Wellhausen, a German, was a man of great intellect. He went as professor of OT to Griefswald (1872 to 1882) where orthodox Lutherans were alarmed at the doubts he cast on the

inspiration of Scripture. He resigned and transferred to the teaching of oriental languages. A Church dictionary says of him, "Building on the work of earlier scholars, he attracted widespread attention by suggesting that the basic document of the Pentateuch ("P") was the youngest rather than the oldest element, and that the development of OT religion became clearer if the Pentateuch were viewed as a composite document. His *History of Israel* (1878; ET 1883) gave him a place in biblical studies comparable, it was said, to that of Darwin in biology." <sup>2</sup>

Wellhausen rejected the time-honoured view held by both Jews and Christians that the Pentateuch (first five books) were written under inspiration of God by Moses. He claimed the Pentateuch is simply a collection of human documents and that the story of Adam and Eve is a myth that can illustrate a few truths.

Until the advent of Wellhausen and the German rationalists, the human intellect was to be placed under the authority of Scripture. His teaching had the effect of placing human reason above Scripture. I suspect that Wellhausen to some extent, fell victim to his own great intellect. He may have thought his great brain didn't need to be subject to the Bible. He could instead, be judge of the Bible. Other like-minded intellectuals followed his lead. His life is a warning to others regarding the danger of arrogance and pride.

Wellhausen and like-minded teachers were influenced by Darwinism - the view that higher forms of life have progressed in form and ability from lower forms of life, allegedly, because of the need to survive. When Darwin was challenged by lack of evidence of transitional species in the fossil record, his reply was, "... I believe the answer mainly lies in the record being incomparably less perfect than is generally supposed." ("On the Origin of Species", p. 140).

Darwinism persists in our schools in spite of the fact that lower forms of life survive quite well, especially the flies, termites, and mosquitoes, much to the annoyance of us humans. The need to survive (progress) has never been demonstrated to be a means of changing the genetic code.

Darwin published his book, "*On The Origin Of Species*" in 1859. In this book, God creating all kinds of living things is replaced by chance random processes and survival of the fittest. Many at the head of big business loved the teaching because it gave legitimacy to their trampling on the opposition and growing bigger at the expense of others. For instance, Rockefeller, who went to Church, but was influenced more by Darwinism than by the Bible in many areas, caused much financial heartache and anguish as he swallowed up smaller oil companies in the expansion his own oil empire (Standard Oil) in a ruthless manner.

The influence of Darwinism was not limited to biology and business, it also influenced theology as viewed by Wellhausen and those who followed him. The Bible came to be seen as the end result of a somewhat evolutionary progress of ideas from men about God. Not only were various documents said to have been put together by unknown authors, the final writing took place much later than traditionally claimed - later than the prophecies in the writings in many

cases, so that the prophecies ceased to be a fore-telling of events to come.

Part of the work of evangelical scholars has been to prove the early authorship of the books of the Bible. Archaeological diggings proving many of the details in the Bible belong to an early period have helped greatly in that area.

The documentary hypothesis claims four documents make up the Pentateuch. Bible students mostly know the documents (in chronological order) by the letters J, E, D, P:

- **J.** For the document which uses the name Jehovah for God.
- **E.** For the document which uses the name Elohim for God.
- **D.** For the Deuteronomy document.
- **P.** For the Priestly document (allegedly the youngest document).

The documentary hypothesis eventually failed close scrutiny. A close examination of Scripture has found some passages of Scripture which are claimed to have qualities of one particular document are next to a verse which allegedly belongs to another document type. The theory, which initially showed promise in the minds of liberals (those who deny the inspiration of the Bible) to be helpful in the study of Scripture, eventually began to look rather messy as more and more contradictions surfaced. The introduction of the computer into the examination of the hypothesis helped to expose the failure of the theory.

### **Bible Schools and Colleges**

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, many of the theological colleges which were training men for the preaching ministry became liberal in their view of Scripture. That is, they began to accept false views such as the theory of evolution and the Wellhausen hypothesis with the consequence that they no longer considered the Bible to be the inspired word of God.

To counter the poor teaching in the liberal theological colleges, bible schools and colleges were established to train men and women, mainly for lay ministry in the Church and for missionary service.

Liberal theological colleges dealt with issues where the current thinking of the day clashed with the Bible by trying to make the Bible support the current thinking, only to find that ideas had to be changed as current thinking changed. Bible Colleges on the other hand, take the view that the Bible reigns supreme over the opinions of man, therefore its teachings can not be twisted to fit current thinking. History proves this view is correct.

The first Bible School in America was founded by A. Simpson in 1882. Classes were held in a theatre in New York City until the school was moved to Nyack in 1897.

In Australia, the oldest continually running Bible College is the *Sydney Missionary and Bible College*, established in 1916 in a period of warfare (WWI 1914-1918). Some detractors did not think it would last because of the war. Thankfully it did last, and I benefited from the sound teaching

of the college in the period 1974-75. Over time, most of the major capital cities in Australia gained a Bible College.

Up to this point, I have mainly dealt with the attack that the Bible has come under from those who do not believe it to be inspired of God. Now I will primarily look at inadequate views of Scripture which have the potential to undermine its respect.

### **Scripture has rank**

If I was addressing a large crowd of Christians and asked them to put up their hands if they had heard their pastor or Bible teacher bring up the subject of the ranking of scripture. My guess is that few would put their hands up, and yet it is an important doctrine (teaching) in certain circumstances. Lets look at this doctrine from both sides.

(a) Scripture does not have rank:

This view looks quite good, after all, it is God who is the ultimate source of every word of the original autographs. If he inspired every one of the original words, then every word must have equal value. If we start placing rank on Scripture, where will it end? We may simply place a low ranking on the passages of Scripture we do not like.

(b) Scripture does have rank:

This view says some passages of Scripture are of higher value or rank than others. At the same time, it affirms the inspiration and authority of all Scripture.

When I talk with someone about Scripture having rank, I inevitably get a strange look as though I have gone soft on the inspiration and authority of Scripture. So I usually ask the person if he can quote John 3:16 from memory. The answer is usually yes. I then think of an obscure passage such as Leviticus 3:16, and ask him if they can quote it. It is at that point that "the penny drops" - to coin an old phrase. The person may have though he believed all Scripture to be equal, but he had been practising a different belief system.

It may be helpful at this point to ask a related question. Does God rank some doctrines more highly than others? Fortunately for us, someone asked Jesus this type of question, he said, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt. 22:36-40).

The first thing we can note is that God *does* rank doctrine. Loving our neighbour is important, but loving God is more important. It ranks above every other teaching. If doctrine has rank, then it follows that passages of Scripture which mention the high ranking doctrines must be ranked highly.

The great reformer, Martin Luther (1483-1546), ranked Scripture according to how clearly it proclaimed Christ. Those passages of Scripture which clearly proclaimed Christ were given the highest ranking. So he, like many Christians today, would have memorised John 3:16. I will urge my

readers at this point to commit to memory scriptures which have high rank.

### The Exodus

In some situations in defence of the Bible, it can be very important to understand that Scripture has rank. In my early days when leading Bible study groups, I gave support to the view that the number of Israelites involved in the exodus from Egypt was about 2.5 million. This figure is based on the statement in Numbers which says, "All the Israelites twenty years old or more who were able to serve in Israel's army were counted according to their families. The total number was **603,550**." (Numbers 1:45-46, emphasis added). If the number of men in the army is reckoned at being one quarter of the population, then the total number of Israelites is around 2.5 million. Some have put the number at more than 3 million.

Back in the 1960s, my parents had the radio tuned to a Christian broadcast and the speaker was giving a message on the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. In his talk, the speaker casually remarked that the number of Jews in the Exodus would have been about 32,000. His remark caught my attention because I knew a passage in the Bible puts the number of fighting men at just over 600,000.

The difficulty with the 2.5 million figure is that it would require a more than tenfold increase in the population for each generation they were in Egypt. They were in Egypt for a period of four generations. The bible says, "In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." (Gen. 15:16).

### A tribe of seventy men go to Egypt

"All those who went to Egypt with Jacob - those who were his direct descendants, not counting his son's wives - numbered sixty-six persons. With the two sons who had been born to Joseph in Egypt, the members of Jacob's family, which went to Egypt, were seventy in all." (Gen. 46:26-27).

Regarding the number of men coming back to the promised land from Egypt. For our maths exercise, let's include the men beyond military age and round the number up to a neat 700,000. In the fourth generation. (Gen. 15:16).

1<sup>st</sup> generation 700  
2<sup>nd</sup> generation 7,000  
3<sup>rd</sup> generation 70,000  
4<sup>th</sup> generation 700,000

As can be seen from above, the number 700,000 can only be reached when the male population increases at an impossibly fast rate of 1,000 percent. The *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* says of the increase necessary to reach a male population (of military service age) of over 600,000. "It is also difficult to suppose, on ordinary calculations of the increase of population, that in 430 years (Ex 12:40), or in 215 years as given in the Septuagint, a tribe of 70 males (Gen 46:26 f; Ex 1:5; 6:14) could have increased to 600,000, or even 100,000 men." <sup>3</sup>

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* says of the number given

in the book of Numbers. "The book opens with a command from God to Moses, early in the second year after the Exodus, to take a census of the arms-bearing men over 20 in each of the clans of Israel. Moses and Aaron, aided by the clan chiefs, take the count, clan by clan, and reach a total of 603,550 men - according to critical scholars, an unbelievably large total for the time and conditions." <sup>4</sup>

The reasons for my rejection of the 2.5 million figure for the population of Israel at the time of the Exodus are scriptural as well as logical.

### The population of Canaan

The Bible makes the comment that Israel will drive out nations larger than itself (Deut. 4:38). If we take this comment to mean that there are just two nations (the bare minimum) in Canaan with populations over 2.5 million, that would bring the total inhabitants in the promised land at the time of the Exodus to at least 5 million. When Israel crossed the Jordan, the number would immediately rise to over **seven million**. That number is higher than the population of Israel in 1993, which at that time stood at **5.4 million**. <sup>5</sup> In 1973 it was **3.3 million**. <sup>6</sup>

Regarding the larger nations, the Bible says, "to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today." (Deuteronomy 4:38). The point is repeated in another passage, "... for you were the fewest of all the peoples" (Deut. 7:8). Also, "Hear, O Israel. You are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls up to the sky." (Deut. 9:1). Moses mentions five nations by name (Exodus 13:5).

From the above passages of Scripture, it is clear that in estimating the number of Israelites at the time of the Exodus, we need to arrive at a number which is less than half the total population of Canaan at the time. To put the calculation in a different way. To arrive at the total population in the promised land after Israel crossed the Jordan river, it is necessary to multiply the number of Israelites by at least three. But firstly, we need to determine what is a reasonable population at that time. The time of the Exodus is generally agreed to be in the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC.

The populations of countries at that time were significantly less than what they are today.

### World Population

2,000 AD was 6,000,000,000.  
1800 AD was 1,000,000,000  
Time of Christ **138,000,000**. <sup>7</sup>  
1,000 BC was 120,000,000.

The above figures indicate that the world population increased **50 fold** in the 3,000 year period between 1,000 BC and 2,000 AD.

A further difficulty for the large number given in Numbers is the fact that in another passage in Numbers, we find that Moses counted all of the firstborn males over one month old and arrived at a much smaller, and in my view, a more realistic figure. That figure being **22,273**

### Firstborn counted

“So Moses counted all the firstborn of the Israelites, as the LORD commanded him. The total number of firstborn males a month old or more, listed by name, was 22,273.” (Num. 3:42-43).

The large difference in the numbers between Num. 1:46 and Num. 3:42-43 is not lost on commentators. *The New Bible Commentary Revised* says on Num. 3:42-43, “The number of firstborn, viz. 22,000, seems small in comparison with 1:46 where the males over twenty numbered 603,550. ... In any case the number in 1:46 is uncertain in view of the term ‘thousand’ (see Introduction).”<sup>8</sup>

### The Hebrew word *elep*

There is some contention over the Hebrew word *elep*, with some suggesting the correct word should actually be ‘*allup*’. Some views on the meaning of the word *elep* significantly reduce the number of Israelites who took part in the Exodus. For instance, “Dr. Flinders Petrie has suggested that for “thousand” we should read “families”; but, though the word (*elep*) sometimes has that meaning (Jdg 6:15; 1 Sam 10:19; 23:23), it is in the singular, and not in the plural, in the passage in question (Ex 12:37).”<sup>9</sup>

### Corruption of the text

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia* makes the point that, “It should not be forgotten that variations in numbers are very commonly found in various texts, VSS, and parallel passages of the Old Testament. Thus for instance (1 Sam 13:5) the Syriac version reads 3,000 for the 30,000 chariots mentioned in the Hebrew and Greek; and the Septuagint (1 Ki 5:11) gives 20,000 for the 20 measures of oil noticed in the Hebrew text. The probable reason for these discrepancies may be found in the fact that the original documents may have used numeral signs - as did the Egyptians, Assyrians, Hittites and Phoenicians - instead of writing the words in full as they appear in the New Testament. These numeral signs - especially in cuneiform - were apt to be misread, and the sign for “unity” could easily be confused with those denoting “sixty” (the Babylonian unit) and “an hundred” - if, in the latter case, a short stroke was added. In the opinion of the present writer the difficulty is due to a corruption of the original statement, which occurred during the course of some fifteen centuries, or more, of continued recopying; but the reader will no doubt form his own conclusions as to this question.”<sup>10</sup>

### Some special problems

The *New Bible Commentary* (1970 edition), under the sub heading, *Some Special Problems*, makes the following remarks regarding the reliability of some of the numbers in the book of Numbers.

“In the book of Numbers a special usage of the terms ‘thousand’ (Heb. ‘*Elep*) and ‘hundred’ (Heb. *me a*) is encountered in the census lists of chs. 1-4 and 26, and in the account of the Midianite war in ch. 31. The census list represent an ancient tradition of tribal quotas of men available for war, so that the terms in question signify military units of some kind (cf. 1 Sa. 8:12; 22:7; 2Sa. 18:1 etc). The exact

numerical value of the terms is unknown. Alternatively, by vocalizing the consonants; -l-p to read ‘*allup*’ we have the meaning ‘leader’ or ‘captain’. Elsewhere again the term ‘*elep*’ denotes ‘family’ or ‘tent group’ (e.g. Jdg. 6:15; 1Sa. 10:19; Mi. 5:2).

Assuming that the terms in Nu. 1-4; 26 and 31 are military in nature and that the lists are ancient and authentic, it is possible that a late compiler of ancient source material misunderstood the true meaning of the terms and, assuming them to be numbers, simply added them up and arrived at the total 603,550 in 1:46. Or alternatively the term ‘*allup*’, ‘captain’, may have been confused with ‘*elep*’, ‘thousand’, so that, e.g., in 1:39 the 62,700 men of Dan may have read originally ‘60 captains, 2,700 men, or even ‘60 captains, 27 *me oi*’. The problem is thus complex and a variety of mathematical solutions has been offered (e.g. R. E. D. Clark, *JTVI*, 1955;...)”<sup>11</sup>

### Archaeologists

The large number is also a problem for archaeologists. I recall watching a Christian lady in her documentary presenting various bits of evidence in support of the biblical record of ancient Israel. The presentation went well until she mentioned to a lady archaeologist with her that the number of Israelites in the exodus was over two million. The archaeologist pulled her up on that point and made the comment that if the number was so large, the huge depletion of people from Egypt should show up in the Egyptian record. Furthermore, if over two million people had wandered through the wilderness, they would have left traces. However, there is no trace of a large number of people of that size travelling through the wilderness. The Christian presenter had no answers to her objections.

A further problem is that while God provided manna six days of the week, with a double proportion supplied on the sixth day to cover needs on the seventh (Ex. 16:26) there was no *regular* supernatural supply of water. They had to rely on the water the wilderness supplied them with. At one point in their journey, water was scarce, causing tension between Moses and the people (Ex. 17:3). If the population was 2.5 million, the daily water requirements would be at least 12.5 million litres (2.7 million gallons) of water. That’s a lot of water to find in an area which is termed, ‘a wilderness’. While the crossing of the Israelites through the wilderness was a miracle, we must be careful to not exaggerate the miracle, otherwise doubt will arise in the minds of some.

A similar problem arises if the number of infants slaughtered by Herod in an attempt to kill Jesus Christ is exaggerated. The Bible states, “When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi.” (Matt. 2:16). Some Bible teachers and pastors have claimed that hundreds were slaughtered in this incident without making a thorough check.

Matthew is the only gospel writer to mention the incident. Also, there is no record of the slaughter in secular writing. This has led some to claim that Matthew is mistaken with this



report. The presenting of a few simple facts will solve this mystery.

The number of infants who could have been killed in this incident was small. Dr William Hendriksen, a highly acclaimed Bible commentator has this to say, "In a town as small as Bethlehem was at that time, even when the immediate surroundings are added as they should be (see 2:16) could the total number of those slain have been more than fifteen or twenty?"<sup>12</sup>

Given the large number of people killed by Roman soldiers on some of their campaigns, it is hardly surprising that the killing of around fifteen or twenty infants did not attract the attention of secular writers. This also partly explains why Matthew is the only gospel writer to comment on the incident. Matthew gives more detail on the early period of the life of Christ than the other Gospel writers. He needs to report on the killing to give context to the escape to Egypt (Matt. 2:13-18).

### A mathematical argument

At this point, I will put forward a mathematical argument which will give a hint as to what the number of people involved in the Exodus was. Earlier in this article I made the point that the world population over the three thousand year period from 1,000 BC to the year 2000 AD, has increased by 50 fold. Using this number, we will calculate from the number of Jews in Israel in the year 2,000. The number was 5.12 million. Divide that by 50 and we get 102,400 for the population in 1,000 BC. That number needs to be reduced further to give an estimate of the population in 1,446 BC when the Exodus took place (according to most evangelical scholars). That leaves us with a figure which is in the 10s of thousands rather than in the millions. This all leads us back to the man in the 1960s who gave a number of 32,000. He could be close to the mark with that number. If we ask the question, which number could the wilderness support with water requirements, the 32,000 or 2.5 million, the clear winner is the 32,000.

It looks like a scribe has made an error in trying to work out the correct number - for reasons explained earlier. Having decided on a number, he has stuck to the number in several places. Unfortunately, study bibles have not been helpful with this problem. It would be of great assistance to the Bible student if there were a brief footnote simply stating, 'this number is uncertain'.

After, the above diversion, we need to consider one more thing about the number of Israelites who left Egypt. Some may wonder why we don't have a couple of clear unambiguous statements on the number of people who took part in the Exodus. I believe the answer is that if the number was particularly important, then God would have revealed the number to the apostles, and it would have become part of apostolic teaching, however, nowhere in the New Testament is the number reported. Perhaps one lesson out of this is that we should learn to focus on the major points of Scripture and not be too distracted by minor events. In other words, pay particular attention to doctrines of highest rank. I will say more about that later.

### The witness to secular history

We do know that the number God called out of Egypt to witness his miracles and to hear his voice was quite large - numbering at least in the tens of thousands. Much larger than the number of people who witnessed many major secular events in history. For instance:

#### Julius Caesar

The crossing of the Rubicon River which formed the northern border of Italy by Julius Caesar and his troops in 49 BC was a major event in Roman history. It marked the beginning of a short civil war which saw Caesar become dictator of Rome later that year. The number of troops who accompanied Caesar and were therefore eyewitnesses to the crossing was one legion; the thirteenth. A legion at full strength numbered **6,000** men.

#### The United States of America

In December 1606, a fleet consisting of three vessels, the *Susan Constant*, *Godspeed*, and *Discovery* left England under Captain Christopher Newport and settled in a place which they named Jamestown in honour of King James. The date of their arrival was 14 May 1607.

The number of men who took part in, and were therefore eyewitnesses to the establishment of the first permanent white settlement of what is now the United States of America was **104**.<sup>13</sup>

#### Australia

The number who witnessed the first white settlement of Australia in 1788 under Captain Arthur Phillip was **1,487**.<sup>14</sup> Around **1,030** remained to make up the settlement after the supporting ships and crew left.<sup>15</sup>

The number of people who bore witness to the mighty working of God through Moses is far greater (numbering at least in the 10s of thousands), because the events are far more important than the early histories of Rome, the US, and of Australia, and we ignore them to our peril.

#### Small number of men, but a powerful God

The number of witnesses to the mighty acts of God in the wilderness was sufficient, and so was the number of men who entered the promise land under Joshua. "It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all the peoples ..." (Deut. 7:6-8).

God informs Abraham, "In the fourth generation your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure." (Gen. 15:16). Many evil deeds were taking place in Canaan, including child sacrifices to the god Molech. It is no wonder that God was angry with the people. Evil had spread throughout the whole land of Canaan by the time of the destruction of its inhabitants under the Israelite army. God further informs Abraham that his descendants will gain "the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites Canaanites, Girgashites and Jebusites." (15:20). Ten nations are listed.

### God fights for Israel

Joshua, by the power of God, repels an Amalekite attack. "As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning." (Exodus 17:11). Aaron and Hur held up the hands of Moses, "so Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword." (Exodus 17:13).

Other instances where God is clearly guiding the Israelites in their takeover of the promised land.

- God holds back the water of the Jordan river so Israel can cross on dry ground. (Joshua ch. 3).
- Joshua leads the people around the city of Jericho, however, it is God who brings about the destruction of its walls, not the Israelite army. The people are commanded to march around the city once each day, then on the seventh day, they are to march around the city seven times. "When the trumpets sounded, the people shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the people gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed; so every man charged straight in, and they took the city." (6:20).
- Joshua 10:11. The Israelites had victory over the Amorites because "... the Lord hurled large hailstones down on them from the sky, ..."
- Joshua 10:13, the Lord prevented the sun from setting for about a full day so the Israelites could destroy the enemies of the Lord.
- Judges 6:11 God tells Gideon to "... Go in the strength you have and save Israel out of Midian's hand. ..." (Judges 6:14). Gideon said, "... My clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my family." Nevertheless, God sends Gideon on a humanly impossible mission to destroy the Midianites with his small force. Although the force is small, God informs Gideon that his army must be reduced further "In order that Israel may not boast against me that her own strength has saved her, ..." (Judges 7:2).
- The Midianites were defeated with just three hundred men. (Judges 7:7, 22, 23).

Clearly, human numbers and strength were not the main factors in overcoming the evil inhabitants of Canaan. God was cleansing the land ready for his people. From this point we turn from the battles for the land of Israel to a battle for respect for Holy Scripture.

### Attack by Atheists

One strategy used by those who attack the Bible is to pick out a passage of Scripture which is of little importance and uncertain, and use it to attack the rest of Scripture. For instance, they may use the case of the more than 600,000 men mentioned in Exodus and argue that if this one verse is wrong, how can we trust the rest of Scripture? Those who are unaware that Scripture has rank have difficulty in answering that type of attack.

I will illustrate my point with the army officer again. A high-ranking officer gives an order, it is typed out and passed down the ranks. A low-ranking soldier looks at the order and comments to his friend that the order has a couple of words

missing. He suggests they ignore the order based on a couple of words being omitted from the original. His friend then informs him that the order comes from a high-ranking officer, and it is clear what they need to do. They will be in big trouble if they fail to obey the order. The same situation applies to the Bible, its authority can not be overthrown by a small number of insignificant copying errors.

There are only a small number of words in the Bible which are uncertain, and Bible scholars know where they are. They are commented on in the margin of good quality study Bibles. The Bible student does not have the liberty to choose for himself which word he can take less seriously.

### The importance of rank

It is hard to find an area of study or activity that does not have rank. Even sport has rank. Many a trainer has told a young tennis player for instance, "Keep your eye on the ball". In maths, it is more important to learn the value of pi to the fourth decimal place (3.1416, rounded up), than to learn the answer to two large numbers multiplied together, e.g.  $357 \times 218 = 77,826$ .

Theology would be very difficult to make sense of if various doctrines did not have rank. We have already seen that the doctrine of highest rank is to love God. By contrast, let's look at a couple of statements in Scripture of low rank.

### Joseph's coat

The meaning of the Hebrew word describing the type of robe Joseph wore is unclear. It could have been multi coloured, ornamental or long-sleeved.<sup>16</sup>

The King James Version of the Bible (first published in 1611) says Joseph's robe was multi coloured. "Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours." (Gen. 37:3, KJV). The New International Version (first published in 1978) says, "...he made a richly ornamented robe for him." (Gen. 37:3, NIV). I will mention one more uncertain passage.

### Ravens were commanded to feed Elijah (1 Kings 17)

"'You will drink from the brook, and I have ordered the ravens to feed you there.' So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.'" (1 Kings 17:4-6).

Some years back, I read an article which focussed on an archaeological discovery of a group of people in the Kerith Ravine area who had a name which is similar to the Hebrew word which we have translated 'Raven'. A suggestion in the report is that God told this group of people to feed Elijah. Translators have assumed the word translated 'raven' refers to the feathered variety.

The point I want to make here is that this incident is not important doctrinally. I am not going to lose sleep if it becomes officially confirmed that the ravens who fed Elijah were people and not birds. The lesson we should learn from the above two passages is that we should keep our focus on important matters and not be distracted by the minor.

Jesus complained about the lack of priority of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. He said, “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practised the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel.” (Matt. 23:23-24).

In another passage regarding rank, we are told, “And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” (1 Corinthians 13:13). From here we now move to another important truth. That being, God is economical with his revelations.

### **Economical with revelations**

All around the world, parents might say to their child, “I have told you once, and I am not going to tell you again” or something similar. In such instances, the parent is being economical with his or her revelation to the child regarding what should be done. Likewise, God is economical with regard to his revelation to his people. There is just one Mt Sinai type of revelation. God does not keep repeating himself to those who choose to be somewhat hard of hearing to the message he is proclaiming.

When the people of Israel made an idol in the form of a golden calf, God did not give them another revelation on another mountain; he gave them punishment. “And the LORD struck the people with a plague because of what they did with the calf Aaron had made.” (Exodus 32:35).

An incident recorded in 1 Kings chapter thirteen serves as a warning that a clear revelation from the Lord, once given, must be obeyed. A prophet was told by God to go to an altar at Bethel and deliver a message to King Jereboam. The king was angered by the message and commanded those with him to seize the prophet, but God afflicted the arm of the king which was stretched out toward the prophet so that he could not draw it back to his side (13:1-4).

The king asked the prophet to call upon God to restore his arm. The prophet did so, and the king’s arm was restored. Out of gratitude, the king said, “‘Come home with me and have something to eat, and I will give you a gift.’ But the man of God answered the king, ‘Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. For I was commanded by the word of the LORD: ‘You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.’” (13:7-9).

An old prophet in Bethel was informed by his sons about the dramatic events which had taken place. He then rode on an ass in search of the prophet and caught up with him. When the old prophet extended an invitation to the man of God to come and receive some hospitality, the invitation was declined on the ground that he was forbidden by God to eat or drink in that place. But, “‘The old prophet answered, “I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: ‘Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.’ (But he was lying to him.)” (13:18). The man of God went back and ate and drank with the old prophet. Afterwards, judgment was pronounced against the man of God that he would not return home. When

he tried to return home, he was killed by a lion (13:24). The man, instead of keeping the word of God, was distracted by another man to follow a false message, and suffered the consequences.

In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man calls out from Hell to Abraham, “... ‘Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.’ Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.’ ‘No, father Abraham,’ he said, ‘but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.’ He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’” (Luke 16:27-31).

From this passage, it becomes clear that the Bible is a complete thorough and sufficient revelation. The reason for not believing, lies at the feet of the person who refuses to believe.

Because God is economical with his revelation to mankind, we need a self-imposed vigilance against moving away from the teachings of Scripture.

Terrible history forgotten can mean terrible history repeated. The false teaching of the documentary hypothesis has had a damaging influence on trust in the Bible for many, but there are other negative influences as well.

### **Subtle attacks on the authority of Scripture**

- A false view of history.
- pseudoscience (false science).
- Subjectivism.
- Pentecostal extremes.

### **Historical attack**

Some in the past have made the claim that the Bible can not be accurate because it mentions **King Sargon** (Isaiah 22:1), and there was no archaeological evidence that he ever existed. Eventually, archaeological evidence came to light which showed he was a genuine king who was quite powerful in his time. He ruled Assyria from 722-705 BC.

### **Ideas of the day from science**

Some try to blend the latest scientific thinking with the Bible. Modern science informs us that some distant galaxies are millions of light years away. That means light, which travels at 299,792.458 Kilometres per second in a vacuum would take millions of years to reach us under present conditions. If that is the case, then the first chapter of the Bible must be wrong, with the clear implication that other chapters could be wrong.

The trouble here is that people can let their limited understanding of how God did things be their guide as to how much they should trust the Bible. Some scientists now know how light got here from vast distances in less than 6,000 years.

The problem was solved as a result of Dr John Hartnett working on another problem. That problem being, why is the temperature throughout the observable universe the same in all directions? According to cosmologists who hold to the ‘Big

Bang' model for the creation of the universe, there should be hot spots left over from the 'Big Bang'. Even if the false idea that the 'Big Bang' occurred 13.7 billion years ago is accepted, there is not enough time for heat to travel from one side of the universe to the other to even out - give an even distribution of heat. This problem puzzled scientists. Christians scientists had a related problem. How can light from distant regions of the universe reach us when the universe is less than 10,000 years old?

The answer lies in the fact that the laws of the universe as we experience them are distorted under extreme conditions such as the expansion of the universe. Einstein's theory of relativity shows that for an object travelling at a very high velocity, time is slower than for a stationary object. An examination of many distant stars has revealed that they appear to be travelling near the speed of light. That means, for the rapidly moving stars, time is moving very slowly. With time moving very slowly on the rapidly moving stars, there is plenty of time for heat to move across the entire universe and even out. It also means there is enough time in space for light to travel through billions of years to Earth, while Earth is less than 10,000 years old.<sup>17</sup>

The Bible does not support the 'Big Bang' theory, but it does tell us in several places that God stretched out the heavens. For instance, "It is I who made the earth and created mankind upon it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshalled their starry hosts." (Isaiah 45:12). See also 42:5, 44:24, 51:13, Jer. 10:12, 51:15. We see evidence of the stretching out of the heavens in the 'red shift' (a shift toward the red because of the rapidly moving stars away from us).

Those who want to find out why we can see distant galaxies in a young universe should read, "*Starlight, Time and the New Physics*" by Dr John Hartnett. The book can be understood by the intelligent reader. A bonus for those who have a degree in maths are the few pages of mathematical equations at the end of the book which prove the author's claims. To find out more, see [www.creationon.com](http://www.creationon.com) and enter author or title in the search box.

### Subjectivism

Subjectivism, existentialism, mysticism and postmodernism all denigrate in their own way the significance of objective truth. The postmodernist might say for instance, "That might be true for you, but it is not true for me." The Bible on the other hand tells us that Jesus died, rose from the grave, showed himself to be alive to many witnesses (1 Cor. 15:1-8). He ascended to the heavenly Father and will return to judge the world (Acts 1:11). Whether the postmodernist likes it or not, the death and resurrection of Christ has severe implications for his life. No one escapes the effect of that historical event.

The lack of regard for the Bible and objective truth is not limited to those outside of the Church. Some branches of the Church have been badly effected by a 'feel good' mentality. Consequently, they work hard on making themselves and others feel good at the expense of real spiritual growth.

### Pentecostal extremes

The 1970s and 80s was a period of many Pentecostal

excesses. Many were of the view that God was directing their life in every little thing, and that He was working even more powerfully in the preacher, so that the preacher in some instances, merely had to suggest that the Spirit of God was on him in a special way, and people would happily swallow everything he said. Under this type of thinking, the objective word of God is replaced by subjectivism. That is; if it feels right, then it must be right.

I have come across instances of preachers appearing on TV who were influenced by the thinking that the Spirit of God will guide their preaching even if they put little or no effort into the study of his Word. What usually results is a message of little substance, and one which exalts the preacher instead of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The blind trust in the supposedly "Spirit led preachers" began to fade when it became clear that some prominent Pentecostal preachers were following their own lusts instead of the Spirit of God. I am referring here to the moral failings of Marvin Gorman, Jimmy Baker and Jimmy Swaggart in the 1980s. Many who followed the "Spirit led preachers" also followed the weak and false doctrines they proclaimed with sad consequences for their lives. Doctrine must be tested against the Word of God and not taken out of context.

I know of people who have decided on a Church using the wrong criteria. The music is wonderful, the people are friendly and they are promising a lot regarding the spiritual advancement of the Church. They painfully realise later they are caught in a sect teaching false doctrines. They have spent years not truly growing, and family relationships become strained or torn apart over the false teachings.

Some Churches do not teach doctrine at all. They have swallowed the lie that doctrine does not matter. Spiritual growth can not take place apart from understanding the truth. Jesus said, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17). Sanctification is the process by which we gradually give up our own selfish way of thinking and adopt more and more God's way of thinking. The chief way in which this process is achieved is by studying the Bible.

### Read the Bible, but which version?

I will begin this section with the story of a man who was converted in his mid twenties. He got into a conversation with two Christian friends with whom he was staying. When the subject of Christianity came up, his two friends took hold of a Children's Bible and showed him the pictures as they related to him Old Testament events. They came to the pictures of Jesus on the cross and the empty tomb. Those events were explained to him and he placed his faith in Christ.

The actions of the two Christian men were quite wise. The recipient of their message was not a child in years, but he was a child in his understanding of Bible history.

I tell the above story because I have come across people who advocate versions which are at the more difficult end of the readability spectrum, without considering the reader. Christians who were converted late in life may have little appreciation of the struggles a young person has when reading the Scriptures in some versions.

When I was in Sunday School, I was given a copy of the

King James Version of the Bible (the commonly used 1769 Oxford Standard Edition). I rarely read it outside of the Sunday School class. Even after my conversion at the age of twelve, it was not extensively read.

While in my late teens, my grandfather gave me a copy of the New Testament which was easy to read, '*Today's English Version*' (published in 1966). It was a delight to read. I read it from cover to cover. Because of the pencil sketches of various scenes throughout, it was easy as a beginner to find favourite passages. Some don't like drawings, even in a teenager's Bible. They might like to consider the fact that chapters and verses were not in the original manuscripts.

Chapters were added in the thirteenth century. The work "... is ascribed to Cardinal Hugo de St Caro (died 1248); by others to Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury (died 1227)." Verses "... first appear in the New Testament in Robert Stephens' edition of the Greek Testament in 1551."<sup>18</sup> That is why there are no references to them in the NT. See for instance Matt. 3:3. Chapters and verses were not always put in the best places. See for instance Matthew 11:1-2. The chapter should begin at verse two. In Acts twenty-two, the next chapter could arguably begin at verse thirty.

Regarding the matter of the best Bible version for you, it is best to start with a Bible that is easy to read, such as '*Today's English Version*' or the highly regarded and accepted '*New International Version*'. The use of a good Bible Commentary will help with difficult passages. After you have read through the Bible from cover to cover, begin again, but consider reading a different version.

A small number of Christians claim the KJV is the most accurate version. However, a study of ancient Greek manuscripts shows that the New Testament was written in the language of the people. The writers did not use expressions that had gone out of use in the previous two hundred years. The King James Version by contrast uses ancient expressions. It also uses considerable poetic licence when it says, "The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth." (Matt. 27:44). The words, "cast the same in his teeth" are not found in any ancient text. For more information on errors in the King James Version, see my paper on the King James Version debate available from my web site listed below.

### **Growing a strong Church**

A Church can't grow without a thorough appreciation and use of God's word. It is the fuel which fans the flames of faith. When the Bible has come under attack in the past, the most effective means of defence has been simply to expose the lies that seek to undermine trust.

Some churches, in an attempt to gain strength, can revert to a type of legalism. I know of a church in a hot region of Queensland Australia which forbade their men from wearing shorts - even while mowing the lawn in the heat! Some insist on adherence to certain minor doctrines. Some seek conformity to the use of a particular version of the Bible. While many such measures may be of help in the area of self discipline, they do not replace a thorough study of, and obedience to the Word of God.

### **Lessons from German history**

In the later half of the nineteenth century, Germany was at the forefront of the rejection of the inspiration of Scripture. So did the lack of respect for Scripture help the German Church and the nation as a whole? The historical evidence is that it did not. The new way of thinking did not produce any great evangelists of the calibre of George Whitefield, John Wesley, Dwight L Moody or Billy Graham. It certainly did not breathe new life into the Churches, in fact, the very opposite occurred.

The weak Church in Germany could not help the country in its hour of need. As Hitler was rising in power, he was being promoted to an almost god-like position in the minds of many. A promotion of any man to that type of position would have raised alarm bells in a healthy Christian nation, but sadly, Germany was not a healthy Christian nation.

The voices raising concerns were very few. One such voice was Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-45). He partly expressed his concerns in a radio broadcast, but before he could complete his message, he was disconnected.

Germany as a whole, rejected Jesus Christ and chose someone completely different - Hitler. Hitler led Germany into many atrocities. The terrible holocaust cost the lives of millions of Jews. Where were the cries from the Church in Germany while all of this was going on? It was weak because it had departed to a large extent from the Bible.

Eventually, nations with stronger Christian Churches defeated Germany, but the cost of the war was high on both sides. Germany in particular suffered a high loss of life, much material damage, and the division of its nation from 1945 to 1989.

### **A different story**

While it is true that liberalism brings death, it is also true that a healthy respect for Scripture brings life. *Reformation Today* magazine reported that the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary had gone through an upgrade out of liberalism in recent times. It states, "This came about under the leadership of **Albert Mohler Jr.** Who was only 33 when he was appointed to the presidency of Southern Seminary. Mohler began a purge at Southern. The liberals were outraged and predicted the demise of Southern ... This dire prophecy proved false. Southern with 4,300 students is now [2008] the largest seminary in America."<sup>19</sup>

### **Some final points**

Toward the beginning of this paper, I made the point that God did not just whisper in a person's ear on the top of a hill in the hours of darkness. His voice thundered across the plain at the foot of Mt Sinai to the whole nation of Israel. The story of the exodus reads like a factual account. Moses reports:

- The town from which the nation left, Avaris/Ramses (Ex. 12:37).
- The day on which the nation left. They left Egypt on the fourteenth day of the first month (Abib), Ex. 12:2, 6.
- Details of events on that day, e.g. they took wealth from the Egyptians (Ex. 12:36-37).

NB: The town from which the Jews left was Avaris, however, much later in time, it was renamed Ramses. The name in scripture was also changed from Avaris to Ramses; hence my designation of the location as 'Avaris/Ramses'.

If someone is making up a story, it is dangerous to specify a place and date. The story can easily be exposed by people who were at the given place on the given day. As we can see, Moses is not fearful of giving the date and place.

At this point, I must expose a false idea which is particularly prevalent in the secular world, and that is the claim that **Herodotus** (c. 484 - c. 425 BC) is the father of history. It is alleged that all history writers before his time were simply writing propaganda in support of their king and people. However, that view overlooks Moses who wrote a factual history. Moses lived in the fifteenth century BC, long before Herodotus.

### The Word of God is pure

“And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.” (Psalm 12:6).

An error of some who hold to the view that only the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible should be read comes out of the idea that there is just one set of words in English which can be declared to be the 'Word of God'. Any deviation from a certain set of words (KJV words) is viewed as deviating from the Word of God. The error leaves the enemy with the opportunity to find just one word wrong, and according to the above faulty thinking, the Word of God is not pure. Good statements of faith on Scripture point to the *original autographs* as being without error, not this or that English version. For instance:

“The Bible is the Word of God. It is inspired and inerrant in its original autographs. It is a complete and final revelation of God.”

### Summary

The Bible is inspired of God, it is authoritative, it is self authenticating, it is clear on all matters of faith and practice. It is ageless in its message, not needing adjustment from time to time as do the opinions of men.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, large numbers of people (even those using the King James Version) drifted away from a sound faith under the influence of Julius Wellhausen and his false ideas. They did so, not because of a problem with the translation they were using, but because to some extent, they rejected the message which is the same in all good versions.

### The message of the Bible:

- The message of the Bible is faultless and unchanging.
- **Unchanging**. It is the same yesterday, today and forever.
- It is **unparalleled**. No other message equals the Bible message.
- It is **powerful**. It is the means by which the spiritually dead are brought to life.
- It is **transforming**. It convicts of wrong-doing and encourages good works.
- It both **unites and divides**. It unites those who were once sinners to the fellowship of the saints. More importantly, it divides from the Devil and his kingdom of darkness, and unites to God and his kingdom of light.
- Brings **close fellowship**. To those who heed its message, it brings about a close fellowship with God, and his Saints.

A man had a message in his Bible which read:

“This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book”

Its message matters. Those who heed its message will be blessed in this life and in the age to come. Conversely, those who reject its message suffer loss, both in this life and the age to come.

### Key doctrines of the Bible

- God is holy, righteous, sinless.
- Through the sin of one man (Adam), every human is a sinner (Rom. 5:17, 3:23, Jer. 17:9).
- The entrance of sin into the world is total in its scope of destructive effect on mankind i.e. physical, mental, emotional and in relationships. Hence the doctrine, 'The total depravity of man'.
- Because God is perfect/sinless, the redemption of man must be a perfect redemption.
- Those who are saved through Christ are viewed by God as perfect.
- The Bible is inspired by God.
- Jesus took on human flesh and was fully God (100%) and fully (100%) man.
- The resurrection of all mankind (Hebrews 9:27). Some after a very fair and thorough trial (Jer. 17:10, Matt. 12:36) will face a just judgment. Those who are redeemed through Christ look forward to a new heaven in which there is no suffering or death (Rev. 21:4).

## Key passages on the authority of Scripture

Exodus 19:9

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you. ...’”

This verse points to that great event on Mt Sinai which is foundational to our respect for Scripture.

Psalms 99:7

“He spoke to them from the pillar of cloud; they kept his statutes and the decrees he gave them.”

2 Timothy 3:16

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.”

Hebrews 4:12

“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

2 Timothy 2:15

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

Matt. 24:35

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

Isaiah 40:8

“The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands for ever.” Also Psalm 119:89, Matt. 5:18.

John 17:17

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

Jeremiah 30:2

“This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘Write in a book all the words I have spoken to you.’”

Psalms 119:105

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

Colossians 3:16

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, ...”

Acts 17:11

“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Psalms 12:6

“And the words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.”

## End Notes

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## **Recommended Reading**

### *The King James Version Challenged*

A look at the claim that the King James Version is the most accurate version. The critique on the King James Version reveals the history behind the KJV and the modern versions. Helpful for those wanting to make an informed decision as to which translation is best for them.

### *The Witness of Prophecy*

Brings before the reader some of the amazing prophecies which are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

The above papers are a free download from:

[www.defenceofthefaitth.org](http://www.defenceofthefaitth.org)

### *The First Muslim* by Lesley Hazleton.

This book reveals on page nineteen something of the fact that when Mohammed gained his first revelation in a cave one night, he was so troubled by his experience that he thought he had come under attack from a Jinn (evil spirit), subsequently, he contemplated suicide to end the terrible mental state he was in. He sought and gained advice from his wife who told him the spirit being was from God, and that he should seek more of the spiritual experiences. Out of this event we find that a woman becomes the first Muslim believer - the wife of Mohammed.

This book is available in digital format. The first few pages can be downloaded as a free sample, with the option to purchase if you enjoy the read. Please be aware that there are some comments in the book which indicate to me that the author is not a Christian.

The above point on Mohammed's revelation is made in several books, including *The World's Religions*, Edited by J.N.D Anderson (Eerdman's Publishing) 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed. 1955, p. 55.

A book which is helpful in understanding the Qur'an (and its problems) is, "*What Every Christian Needs To Know About The Qur'an*", by James R White.

## **Helpful books which explain the Christian faith:**

*The Case For Faith* by Lee Strobel.

*The Case For Christ* by Lee Strobel.

*More Than A Carpenter* by Sean McDowell.

*Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, by Josh McDowell.

*How We Got the Bible*, by Timothy Paul Jones.

*Echoes of Jesus*, by Jonathan Clerke.

*Christian Beliefs*, by Wayne Grudem.

*Concise Theology*, by J. I. Packer

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