

The Bible: Corrupt or Authentic?

I. Introduction: Why this question is so important

Christianity and Islam are both old religions that claim to be historical. They both claim that God intervened in the affairs of mankind at a certain time and place in history, speaking to certain people, acting in certain ways. Also, both faiths place great value on the historical records of these events. They both realize that if books or traditions are not trustworthy then they must be disregarded. In talking with Muslims many times I am faced with the charge, "The Bible has been corrupted." Other Christians I talk to have received the same charge. It is because of these frequent charges against the Bible that I am writing this. No one likes having their holy book criticized, but if a book claims to be the truth it should be able to stand up to criticism. As a Christian I have known that if my Bible is not trustworthy then I should not believe it. This has prompted me to examine all of the historical evidence available, Christian, non-Christian, and anti-Christian to determine the truth. Truth will not be discerned if only part of the evidence is considered. Hearing only part of the story leads to misunderstandings and ignorance.

As I have searched for the truth concerning the Bible I have found that it is the most trustworthy holy book available. **No other Scripture achieves the same standard of trustworthiness as the Bible.** I do not say this to attack other books. I say this as my conclusion after much personal study. I realize that one's eternal salvation depends on the book in which one believes. The Bible and the Qur'an, however, disagree on how one is to be forgiven of their sins and saved from condemnation. The holy books must be questioned, but questioning them must be done with sincerity, objectivity, and reverence.

This booklet presents the historical evidence for the Bible's trustworthiness and also addresses a few of the major misunderstandings Muslims have concerning the Bible that convinces them it has been changed. Many people think that the Bible is irrelevant to them because they think it is a book that has been changed by men many times in its 2000 year history. **This is not true.** The Bible has not been corrupted, and it is as relevant today to people in the computer age as it was when its pages were originally written on animal skins and parchment. Please read the following facts concerning the Bible and its history. If nothing else, it will help you understand why Christians love and trust the Bible, and why allegations of its corruption are not true.

Throughout this paper reference is made to "the Church." In this paper "Church" refers to those who are believers in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior regardless of denomination or nationality. It refers to all who are true Christians regardless of the name given to their Christian organization. In the early centuries of Christianity's existence there was no organizational name for the movement Jesus left on earth. They were not a nation or a political group. Instead, they were an informal movement made up of people of many nationalities and cultures who had believed in Jesus the Messiah. Believers in Jesus were known by many names like followers of "the Way," "Christians," or "believers." The early Church developed an organizational structure but it was spread throughout many

countries and was highly decentralized. It was not until after the Roman Empire extended toleration to Christianity under Emperor Constantine (AD 313) that a highly centralized organization developed.

Reference is also made to the "Holy Spirit" in many places in this booklet. This person is the Holy Spirit referred to in the Bible who is God's Spirit. He is not an angel or man but is a spirit who is fully God in his nature and attributes. Whenever the Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Bible it is in reference to God acting directly rather than using an angel as a messenger.

II. How the Bible was written by God and men

A. Revelation

The idea of "revelation" is that God wants to reveal things to men that they can't discover on their own. God has done this in that he has caused a book to be written which explains who he is, how to get in touch with him, and how he wants men to live. Many people think that the way God does this is by sending down a copy of a perfect book kept in heaven and having an angel dictate this book to a prophet. However, the Bible does not claim this for itself. Instead, it claims to be written by both God and men, and written in a way that perfectly says whatever God wanted it to say.

The Bible consists of two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. These are two separate sections within the Bible. The Old Testament was written before the time of Jesus and the New Testament was written soon after Jesus had returned to heaven.

The Old Testament is God's word to the Jewish people, written during about 1,000 years. It was written in Hebrew with some small portions in Aramaic. It contains 39 books, some of which were written by the same author (e. g. the five books of the Torah which were all written by Moses). Even though there were many human authors, the Jews accept all these books as being from God.

The New Testament is not a changed version of the Old Testament, but new revelation given to Jesus' disciples after Jesus had ascended to heaven. It shows how the Old Testament pointed forward to and was fulfilled by Jesus, and it explains how Jesus' life, work, and teachings relate to our daily lives. It contains 27 books. Some of these were also written by the same author (e.g. the apostle John wrote a Gospel, three letters and the book of Revelation).

The following scriptures provide an explanation of the revelation process:

1. "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways."
(Hebrews 1:1, The New Testament, New International Version (NIV))

Within the Bible there are many different types of literature, e.g. history, poetry, proverbs, biography, preaching, direct teaching, letters and prophecy. All the people God used to reveal his word were devout and holy, but they were different sorts of people: prophets, kings, shepherds, fishermen, scholars, a soldier, a civil servant, a doctor, missionaries. All of these were chosen by God to act as prophets by receiving, speaking, and writing his words to people.

God used many methods to reveal his word to these individuals. To some he spoke directly, or in dreams or visions. To others he sent angels. In most cases he guided people as they wrote using all their normal human faculties of intelligence and personal writing style to write a work of history or a letter, for example. God guided them all, making sure that what they wrote was what he wanted said, without error, so that their words were truly God's word. All of the Bible's writers were supervised in this perfect way by God's Holy Spirit, who inspired their thoughts and words, so that the whole Bible is equally God's inspired revelation. As the Bible itself says:

2. "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:20,21, NIV)

When Jesus was in the world, he accepted the Old Testament as being holy scripture. Even in the small portion of Jesus' words and teachings recorded in the Gospels, he referred to almost every book of the Old Testament. Jesus frequently referred to the Old Testament in his teaching and always spoke of it and treated it as the uncorrupted word of God. He never spoke of the Old Testament as having been dictated by angels as a copy of a heavenly book. He recognized the human authors but spoke of their prophetic writings as the true word of God.

Christians have accepted the Old Testament as Scripture without any changes on the authority of Jesus and this has always been the case since the beginning of the Church. The Jews do not accept the New Testament as Scripture because they do not recognize Jesus as the Messiah.

B. Jesus did not receive a book from heaven

There is no Scriptural or historical evidence that Jesus received a book from heaven which He then delivered to his disciples. This can be seen from the following facts:

1. The word "gospel" is used by Jesus and the Apostles, not as the title of a book but as the name of a message: the good news about Jesus Christ himself and his kingdom. This message was mentioned and preached under this name by:
 - Jesus: Matthew 11:5 a quote from the Old Testament, Isaiah 61:1; Mark 1:15

- John the Baptist: Luke 3:18
 - Matthew: Matthew 9:35
 - Peter: Acts 8:25; 15:7; 1 Peter 1:12
 - John: Acts 8:25; Revelation 14:6
 - Paul: Acts 14:15; 20:24; 1 Corinthians 9:16
 - All the other Apostles: Acts 14:7
2. Jesus did not leave a book to his disciples but instead promised to send the Holy Spirit who would guide them in what they wrote. There is no evidence that Jesus gave a book to his disciples. From the Apostles through the Church Fathers down to our day, the books of the New Testament, including the four Gospels have been viewed as the fulfillment of the following promise by Jesus:

"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things, and will remind you of everything I have said to you." (John 14:26, NIV)

3. Conclusion

The Bible claims to be the Word of God and fully recognizes the role human authors have played in its revelation. These authors were prophets inspired by God's own Spirit and protected from writing errors. Jesus upheld this view and never accused the Old Testament of corruption because of its human authors. He held it to be the Word of God given through men. Jesus also promised this same kind of revelation to his disciples. There is no evidence that Jesus received a heavenly book which he then gave to his disciples. Instead, he confirmed the revelation that went before him and promised a similar one to come. These are the Old Testament and the New Testament of the Bible.

C. How the Bible was collected by God and men

There are two stages in the collection of the individual books that make up the Bible. The first is the collection of the 39 books that make up the Old Testament. The second is the process of the collection of the 27 books making up the New Testament.

1. The Old Testament

The Old Testament books were collected by the Jews over a 1,000 year span of time ending 400 years before the birth of Jesus. As God gave revelation through His prophets their writings were recognized as sacred, holy Scripture. Copies were kept by the priests, first in the Tabernacle (Deut. 31:24-26) and then in the

Temple (2 Kings 22:8). This continued until the time of Jesus. They were also copied and kept by the different communities of Jews as they were scattered through the ancient world. Before the time of Jesus, Jews in Babylonia, Palestine, Egypt, and all over the Roman world had copies of the entire Old Testament. They had protected their Scriptures from being corrupted for hundreds of years. Jesus confirmed this in that He quoted or alluded to almost all of the 39 books of the Old Testament, and He never made a statement that the Old Testament had been corrupted. Instead He only affirmed its complete trustworthiness and divine authority. Note Jesus' words:

"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." (Matthew 5:18, NIV)

2. The New Testament

The collection of the New Testament books also protected revelation given to the Church from corruption. Jesus promised that He would, through the Holy Spirit, direct the Apostles into all the truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Every New Testament book was written by an Apostle or a companion of the Apostles receiving the gift of prophecy. These writers received revelation from God which they carefully recorded. God guided them in what they wrote and protected their writings from error. Though these books were not collected and kept at the Temple, they were treasured and protected by the Christians. They were copied carefully and shared among the churches. The best evidence that they were protected from corruption is provided by the modern science of textual criticism. Many early copies of the New Testament or parts of the New Testament still exist and when compared to each other show that they have not been changed. Later, as false prophets and teachers claimed to write or have other books that should be in Scripture, the Church was forced to make **official** statements as to which books were **already** recognized as Holy Scripture and which were false books.

D. The Apostle Paul

Many today question whether the Apostle Paul's writings should be in the New Testament. In examining this it must be remembered that his writings have been regarded by Christians as inspired by the Holy Spirit and true Scripture since the days of the Apostles. Note the following things concerning Paul and his writings:

1. Scripture records three times Paul's miraculous conversion to Christianity through personally meeting Jesus:
 - Acts 9:131
 - Acts 22:121

- Acts 26:23

Paul went from being a zealous persecutor of Christians to being perhaps the most zealous of preachers of Christ.

2. Paul received his teaching personally from the ascended Jesus and had it approved by the Apostles

- Galatians 2:10

This applied especially to Peter and John, two of Jesus' closest disciples.

3. The other disciples recognized Paul's writings as God inspired within their lifetimes calling it Scripture

- 2 Peter 3:15,16

1. There was never doubt in the early history of the church as to the Scriptural authority of Paul's writings.

The doubts expressed by some scholars today are based on speculative interpretations of the existing firm historical evidence. They were written within the same 30 year time period as the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Paul also knew at least three of the four writers of the Gospels personally and had their full confidence. Mark and Luke had both been Paul's traveling companions on missionary journeys. Paul met John and probably met Matthew (the fourth Gospel writer) in Jerusalem when his teachings were approved by all the Apostles. Paul's writings represent the knowledge of Jesus and His teachings shared by all of the Apostles.

5. The earliest Apostolic Father (church writer after the age of the Apostles) quoted from Paul's epistles.

Polycarp (AD 69 - AD 155), was a student of the Apostle John, who wrote the Gospel bearing his name, the three epistles bearing his name, and the book of Revelation, all in the Bible. In his letter to the Philippians, Polycarp quotes Paul's epistles, Matthew's and Luke's Gospels, Acts, Hebrews, 1 Peter, and John's epistles all as Holy Scripture, as well as numerous Old Testament books. He also mentions Paul by name as the Apostle who taught the Philippians "accurately and firmly the word of truth" referring to Paul's epistle to the Philippians in the Bible. He also numbers Paul with the other Apostles as being one of them. (1)

E. The early history of the Bible's collection

The early history of the Bible's collection as Scripture can be summarized as follows:

1. 1400-400 BC: Writings of the Hebrew Prophets are collected and kept in first the Tabernacle and then the Temple.
2. 400 BC-AD 30: The same Old Testament writings are recognized as Scripture by all the Jews and by Jesus.
3. AD 30-100: Writing of the New Testament books was done by the Apostles and prophets under the Holy Spirit's guidance. Following Jesus' example, the early Christians (Jewish and Gentile) used the Old Testament as their main Bible and copied and circulated the New Testament books as they were written, recognizing them as Scripture alongside the Old Testament.
4. AD 100-200: Many heresies arose together with heretical scriptures. Also, early Christians wrote books for edification. The Church was challenged to respond to heretical books and Christian books as they began to circulate alongside authentic books of Scripture and cause confusion as to the contents of Scripture.
5. AD 200-400: More heresies arose causing the Church to respond with further clarification and defense of the contents of the Bible.
6. AD 400: Contents of the Bible recognized fully and completely.

It must be remembered that all of this occurred with the Church being scattered around the Mediterranean and the Middle East without the convenience of modern communications. Also, in Christianity's first 300 years of existence it was an illegal religion with its books subject to destruction, Christians subject to imprisonment, and no central authority over the whole Church to oversee the collection and protection of the Bible.

F. The Apocrypha

The books of the Apocrypha are books of ancient Jewish literature written between 300 B.C. and 100 A.D. Some of them are historical and others are spiritual in their contents. Some are said to have been written by prophets whose writings are in the Jewish Bible or Old Testament, but this is not true. They have historical inaccuracies and theological contradictions that disqualify them from being Scripture. Also, none of these books was written by a genuine prophet and they were not included as Scripture by the Jews of Jesus' time. They were not inspired by God and Jesus never quoted from any of them, as He did the Scriptural books.

When the Jewish Bible was translated into Greek (the Septuagint version) the Apocrypha was included in the translation, but it was clearly understood which books were Scripture and which were not. Later, some Christians began to wander away from the true Bible's teaching they to set up ways of doing things which were not what God had said He wanted. At the same time the books of the Apocrypha came to be seen as being true Scripture, even though they were not. The Churches which have grown from this way of

thinking are the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Churches, they are ruled by popes or patriarchs. As they went further away from true Biblical Christianity the Popes officially recognized the Apocrypha as Scripture. Roman Catholic Bibles contain 15 books of the Apocrypha (I and II Maccabees, Tobit, Judith, The Rest of Esther, The Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, The Letter of Jeremiah, The three additions to Daniel, The Prayer of Manasses, and I and II Esdras.) of which all but the last three were officially recognized as Scripture at the Council of Trent in 1548. Greek Orthodox Bibles contain 10 books of Apocrypha (I Esdras, Tobit, Judith, 1,2,and 3 Maccabees, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and the Letter of Jeremiah.) and they were officially recognized at the Council of Jassy in 1642, but even Greek Orthodox scholars now see them as being "less inspired." (2)

When the Protestant churches separated from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16th and 17th centuries, the Anglican Church chose to keep the Apocryphal books in the Bible, but returned to the old way of defining clearly that they were not fully Scripture (Article 6 of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglican Church). Most Protestant churches have gone far beyond this in removing them from the Bible altogether, returning to the original Jewish way. The Apocrypha should not be thought of as part of the Bible, or as being given by God.

G. The Gospel of Barnabas

Many Muslims claim that the book, The Gospel of Barnabas, is the real gospel that Jesus gave to his disciples. An Italian version of this book came to light in the early 1700's. It is a book that gives many alternative accounts of events in Jesus' life than those in the four Gospels of the New Testament. Many of the events and discourses it records are not in agreement with the four Gospels. This book, though, has been proven to be a forgery, almost certainly written in 1585.(3) It has historical, geographical, and doctrinal errors that prove it could not have been written by Barnabas, the disciple of Jesus in the early church. It also contradicts the Qur'an in many places, for instance calling Muhammad the Messiah rather than Jesus, and saying that Mary did not suffer birth pangs in child-birth. (4)

The translation of The Gospel of Barnabas most used by Muslims is the one done by Canon Lonsdale and Laura Ragg in 1907. The translators state in their introduction to the translation that "the true date lies ... nearer the sixteenth century than the first." (5)

"We believe that when honest men throughout the East know the contents of the book, they will assign its true historical value - which is exactly nil." (5)

This book can in no way compete with the four Gospels of the Bible as being a more trustworthy source. It is more likely an interesting but insignificant glimpse of events in Renaissance Europe.

H. Conclusions

The Old Testament was recorded, collected, copied, and preserved carefully through the 1000 years of its revelation. The Jews treasured it and protected it with diligence and devotion. Jesus confirmed this in his use of the Old Testament and his own careful devotion and obedience to it. The New Testament was likewise recorded, collected, copied, and preserved carefully. The Christians treasured it and the Old Testament and considered them both necessary to their Scriptures. The Christians also thoroughly guarded the New Testament from the addition of unauthentic books. The Apostle Paul was a true apostle of Jesus and his writings deserve their place in the New Testament as revelation from Jesus through Paul. The Gospel of Barnabas, while presenting a drastically different view of the life of Jesus, cannot be regarded as an authentic book from one of Jesus' disciples. It is instead a fraud and a forgery.

III. How the Bible was preserved by God and men

A. The Bible has been preserved without corruption.

This can be demonstrated by examining how the Jews preserved the Old Testament and by examining how Christians have preserved the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. This objective examination confirms the words of Scripture where God says:

"The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever." (Isaiah 40:8 (NIV))

When this issue is examined the following things can be seen:

1. The Old Testament of the Bible has always been the Scripture of the Jews,
2. the Old and New Testaments of the Bible have always been the Scriptures of the Christians, and
3. these books have not been tampered with or corrupted but are the authentic revelations God gave to the Jews and Christians.

The focus of the evidence given will be on the historical time period preceding Muhammad. This is because this is the only possible time corruption of these documents could have occurred to the degree that many Muslims assert.

IV. Authenticity of the Old Testament

The following verses from the Old Testament show how seriously God takes the preservation of His Word. He will not allow it to be corrupted. The evidence that follows shows how history bears this out.

- ***"Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in Him. Do not add to His words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar."*** (Proverbs

30:5,6 (NIV))

- ***"Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you."*** (Deuteronomy 4:2 (NIV))

A. Manuscript Evidence

There are many Hebrew Old Testament manuscripts predating Muhammad. (6)

1. **The Dead Sea Scrolls:** these manuscripts were found in the desert by the Dead Sea and contain one complete Old Testament book (Isaiah) and thousands of portions and fragments of varying length. Among these manuscripts every Old Testament book is represented except Esther. They are all dated before AD 70, and many can be dated a century earlier.
2. **The Nash Papyrus:** a papyrus portion containing sections of Exodus and Deuteronomy dated to between 100 BC to AD 70.
3. **The Geniza Fragments:** these are 200,000 fragments of Biblical texts in Hebrew and Aramaic, other Jewish religious literature, and other nonreligious texts. The earliest Biblical texts are dated to the AD 400's.

Though manuscripts have not yet been found that date back to the times of Moses and the Old Testament prophets, manuscripts do exist from a very ancient date and these have the same contents of the Old Testament we possess today. The textual variants in them do not alter one doctrine but are mainly scribal errors consisting in items like misspelled words, transposed words, and portions copied twice.

B. Lists of Old Testament books predating Muhammad lists.

The following people and events pre-dating Muhammad gave lists of the books making up the Old Testament:

1. **Josephus (AD 90):** a Jewish historian who wrote in defense of the Jewish nation and faith to Greeks and Romans. (7)
2. **Council of Jamnia (AD 71-117):** an assembly of Jewish elders at a college that in the course of discussions listed Old Testament books recognized as Scripture.(8)
3. **Council of Laodicea (AD 363):** a Christian church council held to recognize the true books of Scripture in the Old and New Testaments for the use of churches in their services and teaching.(9)

These main lists (there are other personal lists in the writings of various early church fathers) show that the Jews were very sure of the contents of the Word of God they had received. They all list the same books that are in the present Old Testament. The

Christians accepted the same Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God also. There was no disagreement between them as to which books were in the Old Testament.

C. Evidence from within the Old Testament as to its own transmission

Presented here are Scripture quotations which show that the preserving of manuscripts goes back to Moses. (All quotations are from the New International Version of the Bible)

1. Deuteronomy 31:26: (Around 1400 B.C., Moses commanding the Jewish priests) ***"Take this book of the law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God. There it will remain as a witness against you."***
2. Joshua 24:26: (Joshua succeeded Moses as leader of the Israelites) ***"And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the Lord."***
3. 1 Samuel 10:25: (Samuel was a prophet after Moses and before David) ***"Samuel explained to the people the regulations of the kingship. He wrote them down on a scroll and deposited it before the Lord."***
4. Proverbs 25:1: (Solomon's Proverbs were preserved) ***"These are more proverbs of Solomon, copied by the men of Hezekiah King of Judah."***
5. 2 Kings 23:24: (Josiah was a king of Israel after David and Solomon who sought to reform Israel after the people had lapsed into idolatry) ***"Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem. This he did to fulfill the requirements of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had discovered in the temple of the Lord."***
6. Jeremiah 45:1: (Jeremiah was the prophet who most clearly predicted Babylon conquering the Jews and taking them to Babylon. He himself died in Egypt having been taken there against his will by some Jewish rebels. Jeremiah also predicted that the Jews would return to their land after 70 years.) ***"This is what Jeremiah the prophet told Baruch son of Neriah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah, after Baruch had written on a scroll the words Jeremiah was then dictating:..."***
7. Daniel 9:2: (Daniel was a prophet to the Jews in captivity in Babylon) ***"in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years."***
8. Ezra 7:6,10: (Around 400 B.C., Ezra was a scribe sent to the Jews after they had returned to their land after the seventy years exile in Babylon.) ***"this Ezra came***

up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given. The king had granted him everything he asked, for the hand of the Lord his God was on him....For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel."

The Israelites preserved their scriptures throughout their history. The oldest Old Testament manuscripts date back to the 400 year period preceding Jesus' birth, the period of time between Ezra the scribe and Jesus. During this period the Old Testament Scriptures were to be found wherever Jews were found, especially in Egypt, Palestine, and Babylonia.

D. Jesus' testimony to the Old Testament's authenticity

Most of Jesus' public ministry was spent preaching and explaining the Old Testament. He knew the whole of the Old Testament intimately and quoted from it readily. In every instance he upheld the Old Testament as we have it today as the Word of God without error or corruption. He only spoke of it in ways that assumed its total authority and truth, and he held others accountable to it. Jesus also submitted himself to it unreservedly and in totality. He lived according to it strictly, and He even died according to its words, quoting it three times while on the cross, and dying in the precise manner it predicted the Messiah would die (Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22). There is no evidence that Jesus held any other book given to the Jews to be the word of God and no evidence he saw any of the Old Testament as being corrupt.

E. Attempts by the Jews to corrupt their Scriptures

The only such attempt known to this writer is discussed in Edmund Wilson's book, The Scrolls From the Dead Sea. This scholar documents a Greek version of the Old Testament that some Jews made to disagree with the Septuagint. The passages they altered concerned major prophecies of the Messiah and were changed to make it more difficult to identify Jesus as the Messiah. They did this because Christians were using the Septuagint with great success to show that Jesus really was the promised Messiah.(10) Note that this was a failed attempt! First, it did not change the text of the Hebrew Scriptures but was a biased translation into Greek. Second, this version was not adopted by mainstream Judaism even though they too rejected Christ. Instead, this translation dropped off into obscurity. Third, note that it involved only verses concerning Jesus, not whole books or sections of the Old Testament. And fourth, note the motive of the changes: to deny recognition of Jesus as the predicted Messiah of the Old Testament. This attempt shows how God, the great majority of the Jews, and the Christians protected the authentic Word of God given to them.

F. Conclusions

The Old Testament in the Bible as is available today is the same as was available in and before Jesus' time. This Old Testament is also considered by Jews to be their Holy

Scriptures. There is no evidence that any other book except the version mentioned above was ever regarded as the Scriptures of the Jews. The Jews and the Christians protected the Old Testament Scriptures from corruption and any isolated attempts to corrupt it did not succeed. Therefore the present Old Testament is the uncorrupted Scripture of the Jews that was available before and up to the time of Muhammad.

V. Authenticity of the New Testament

A. Aim: To demonstrate that the New Testament of the Bible is the Scripture that Jesus delivered to His disciples.

1. ***"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you."*** (John 14:26 (NIV))
2. ***"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, for 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 (NIV))
3. ***"I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book."*** (Revelation 22:18,19 (NIV))

God takes the preservation of His word very seriously. He will not let it be corrupted. The following historical evidence bears this out.

B. Manuscript Evidence

New Testament manuscripts predating Muhammad:

1. Number of Greek New Testament manuscripts predating Muhammad that are currently in existence available for study: 192.
2. Number of Greek lectionaries (Books used in church services which contain scripture portions) predating Muhammad that are currently in existence: 5.
3. Number of translations of the Greek New Testament predating Muhammad that are in existence: 33.
4. This total of 230 manuscripts are originally from the same geographic areas as the Old Testament manuscripts mentioned earlier. These manuscripts all agree with the thousands of manuscripts that exist dating from and after Muhammad's time

up until our present Bibles.

5. The earliest manuscript known is a papyrus fragment containing portions of the verses of John 18:31-33,37-38. It is dated with certainty to at least as early as AD 125. It is housed at the John Rylands Library in Manchester. There are also two Greek fragments from the Dead Sea Scrolls that may very well be from the Gospel according to Mark and 1 Timothy. Both of these fragments date to before AD 70.(12) The earliest complete copy of the New Testament is the Codex Sinaiticus which dates to the AD 300's. It is on public display in the British Museum in London.
6. Between all these manuscripts there are many variants in the texts, primarily consisting of scribal errors. Please note the following facts concerning these variants:
 - a. All of the variants have been preserved out of respect for the text of the Word of God. Rather than lose any of God's word, these variations have been preserved, catalogued, studied, and evaluated with the highest and most impartial degrees of scholarship possible so that the true text may be determined.
 - b. None of these variants affect any major or minor doctrine of the Christian faith. The content of the New Testament is not in question.
 - c. The largest passages of some dispute (Mark 16:9-20; John 7:53-8:11; and 1 John 5:8) likewise do not affect any major or minor doctrines in the New Testament. Also, the degree they are in dispute is greatly exaggerated and precise translations of the New Testament include them in the text or in the margin so that they are available to the reader.
 - d. With all this in mind, the New Testament is at least 99.5% accurate with the other .5% in dispute fully available for study. (13) It is not a question of the .5% being missing. This .5% is included so that none of God's word is mistakenly excluded.
 - e. It has been asserted that the net effect of these errors of transmission is like the effect of a drop of urine in a cup of water thereby contaminating the whole cup. **This is not an accurate picture.** An accurate picture is that of dirt and stones present in a bag of rice. One doesn't throw out the rice because of a few stones! One washes it and removes the stones which are easily seen, then cooks the rice and enjoys it. Even if a stone gets cooked with the rice it can still be removed and the rice is not contaminated. This is the situation with the New Testament. All of the stones are known and have been removed. Any dirt that may be left in that .5% cannot contaminate the 99.5% and is easily seen and removed.

C. Evidence from the Apostolic Fathers

These are early Christian church leaders who wrote extensive commentaries on the Bible who lived in the centuries before Muhammad (AD 69 - AD 150).

1. Almost the entire New Testament can be reconstructed from the quotations of Scripture in their writings. These quotations are catalogued and in no way disagree with the manuscript evidence explained above. (14)
2. There is an unbroken line of testimony from our day concerning the authenticity of the New Testament going through the Apostolic Fathers to the closest disciples of Jesus. (15) The unswerving testimony of these writings is that the New Testament we possess contains what Jesus taught and revealed to his disciples in the first century.

D. God's miraculous preservation of the Bible through 250 years of intense persecution

Within twenty years of the Church's beginning the Roman Emperor Nero started the first of ten major state sponsored persecutions against Christians that continued through the next two and a half centuries. The last of these in AD 303 ordered the destruction of all Christian Scriptures. The manuscripts we have from before this time survived this persecution. (16)

E. All attempts to change the New Testament have failed

The most significant attempt known to this writer before the time of Muhammad is that of Marcion (died AD 160). Because of his theological ideas he rejected the entire Old Testament, and only accepted ten of Paul's epistles and a changed version of the Gospel according to Luke as Scripture (He omitted all Old Testament references in Luke's Gospel). He also did not believe that Jesus was really a man but only appeared to be one. (17) Note this was a failed attempt! God and Christians preserved God's word, guarding it from corruption. Note also the motive of the attempt: to make the Bible conform to one man's religious ideas and his personal beliefs about Jesus. It was not a change claiming to go back to some more historical or accurate original version given by Jesus. It was a change made by a man who didn't like what the Bible said about Jesus.

The most significant modern attempt is that embodied in the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, used by the sect known as the "Jehovah's Witnesses." This is not an attempt to change the actual Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic texts but it is a translation purporting to correct all of the other English translations of the Bible which they believe to be corrupt. Their translation purports to be a scholarly translation yet none of the translation committee have recognized degrees in Greek or Hebrew exegesis.(18) Also, the verses that they translate in significantly different ways from other English translations are all done to line up with their particular peculiar doctrines. Their lack of success in changing the Bible can be seen in that this sect is the only one who uses this translation, and this translation is not regarded as reliable, neither by secular scholars nor by Christian scholars.

F. Relationship of the New Testament to the Old Testament

Another significant line of evidence supporting the Bible's trustworthiness is seen in the harmonious relationship of the Old Testament to the New Testament. These books agree with each other and complement each other to an extent not seen in any other literature of their kind. This is more incredible when it is realized that they were written over a 1500 year period with God using at least 40 human authors. To demonstrate this, two issues will be presented and briefly demonstrated, Jesus' identity as the Messiah and the theme of sacrifice.

G. Conclusions

The Old and New Testaments have been preserved carefully through their long histories. They have withstood tests from heretics and emperors to change and destroy them. This all only confirms what we would expect from God, that He would preserve His holy Word and not allow men to corrupt it.

VI. Bible Translations: New versions by men or faithful translations of God's Word?

A. Bible versions

Some say that there are different versions of the Bible, meaning Bibles that are significantly different from each other in content and meaning. Part of this misunderstanding is due to a misunderstanding of the word "version." This word can mean one of several different variations of a story, such as a first version or draft and a second version. This is what is meant in the phrase "new, improved version." But when used of the Bible another meaning of the word "version" is in view. As the Oxford English Dictionary has it, it means, "A rendering of some text or work from one language into another; a translation." (19) That is what is meant by the titles of English Bibles. The "Authorized Version," the "New International Version," and the "New Revised Standard Version," are all titles of different translations of the Hebrew and Aramaic Old Testament and the Greek New Testament. They are different translations of the same Bible.

Some say that there are different versions of the Bible, the Protestant, Catholic, and Greek Orthodox Bibles. Are these really different versions? No, they are not. The true Bible, containing the 66 books recognized as the true Scriptures by all Christians, forms the main part of all these "versions" and they all contain the same text, translated into various languages. The difference between them has to do with some Bibles adding other books as well as the 66. These other books are known as "apocrypha" and are discussed in more depth in the earlier section titled "The Apocrypha."

B. Principles of translation

Since there are so many Bible translations, does it mean there are many Bibles instead of just one? No. These translations are all translations from the Greek, Aramaic and Hebrew languages used for the original text of the Bible. The Church has never hesitated to consider translations of these original languages of Scripture as being authentic. They considered them worthy of being called the Word of God. Islam's view of the Qur'an is a contrast here. The Arabic Qur'an is held to be the only authentic version. Translations are viewed as merely conveying the meaning or interpretation of the Qur'an and so are not deserving to be called "the Qur'an". This has never been the view of the Bible in Christianity or Judaism.

An example of this is the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint which was in use alongside the Hebrew Old Testament at the time of Jesus. Both were considered to be God's word to the Jews. Though there is no reference to Jesus naming this translation he would have known of it and probably used it. Some think that Jesus only spoke Aramaic and would not have been able to read Greek. This is unlikely in that Jesus lived in a cosmopolitan, multi-lingual culture. He grew up in northern Palestine which had a strong Greek language influence from the Greek-speaking cities nearby. This area had been dominated by Greek-speaking peoples for 200 years before Jesus' birth. Jesus was also a carpenter living near the cosmopolitan city of Sepphoris. As a tradesman in a part of an occupied country dominated by the Greek language, he very likely knew Greek as well as Aramaic. He also knew the Hebrew of the Old Testament and could read it fluently enough for private and public reading. The apostles who wrote gospels (Matthew and John) quote from the Septuagint and present Jesus quoting this version as well as the Hebrew version. The early Christians used this translation of the Old Testament, especially those from Gentile, Greek-speaking backgrounds but also those from Jewish backgrounds.

C. Style of translation

There are two main ways that translations are made. One is to provide, as much as possible, a word for word rendering of the original Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic texts. The Authorized Version, the New King James Version, The New Revised Standard Version and the New American Standard Version are all examples of this style of translation. The other approach to translation is to try to convey the meaning of the original in a way that is as readable and easily understood as possible. These translations emphasize the grammar and idioms of the language of translation rather than the original languages of the Bible. They use idioms of common speech and simplify wording as much as possible. The Good News Version, The New International Version, and the Contemporary English Version are all this style of translation.

There are other kinds of Bible translations available called paraphrased versions. These are translations that are then simplified and made even more readable than the second group of translations mentioned above. The Living Bible is the best known example of paraphrased Bible translations.

D. The Bible is not in a sacred language

Perhaps much of the misunderstanding is because Arabic is held to be a sacred language by Muslims. Many Muslims also believe that Arabic is the language of heaven and the only language that God hears in prayer. Greek, Aramaic, and Hebrew have never been held as sacred languages or the language of heaven by Christians or Jews. They are not used as sacred languages for prayer, reading, or medicine. Since words can be accurately translated into other languages, translations of the Bible have always been held to be God's word, as well as the originals. This is held with the understanding that they are the Word of God in so far as they accurately convey the meaning of the original languages.

E. Bible translations preceding Muhammad's birth

In the following centuries, the Bible, containing both Old and New Testaments, was translated into many languages. All of these translations were held to be God's word. Here is a list of the translations that predate 600 AD (Muhammad was born about 570 AD). The list is separated into translations made of the Old Testament and ones made of the New Testament. Most of these were done by Christians. (20)

1. Greek Versions: (Translations of the Hebrew Old Testament used in regions of the Roman Empire, done by Jews)
 - a. Septuagint (also called the LXX): made by Jews in Egypt between 285 and 200 BC.
 - b. Aquila's Version (AD 130): made by a Jew living in what is now Turkey.
 - c. Symmachus' Version (AD 170): made by a Jew living in Palestine.
 - d. Theodotion's Version (AD 150-200): made by a Jew.
 - e. Other Jewish Greek versions are known but no copies or portions survive.
2. Latin Versions: (Used in Western and Southern Europe, and in North Africa. Done by Christians)
 - a. Old Latin Version (AD 100-200): translated by Christians from the LXX Version and the Greek New Testament.
 - b. Jerome's Version, also known as the Vulgate (AD 405): Jerome was a Christian scholar who made his translation from the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.
3. Syriac Versions: (Syria, Palestine, and the Northern Middle East, done by Christians)
 - a. Peshitta Version (AD 100-300): translated mainly from the LXX and the Greek New Testament by Christians and underwent revisions as other older

texts became available.

- b. Philoxenian Version (AD 508): made by a Christian named Polycarp. It was revised to form the next version.
 - c. Harklean (or Heracleian) Version (AD 616-617): made by the Christian Thomas of Harklensis. Note: The Philoxenian and Harklean versions are known about but not available in a complete form. They can be partially reconstructed from the writings of church fathers.
 - d. Anonymous version of the Old Testament made by Jews for Abgar, King of Edessa (modern Iraq): made about the time of Jesus, AD 150. No text of this one remains but it is known about through the writings of a Christian church father, Jacob of Edessa.
4. Coptic Versions: (Used in Egypt, done by Christians)
- a. Sahidic Version (AD 250): this was the version used in upper Egypt and was translated from the Greek Old Testament and New Testament.
 - b. Akhmimic Version (AD 250-300): this was a version based on the Sahidic.
 - c. Bohairic Version (AD 300's): this was a version used in lower Egypt translated from the Greek Old Testament and New Testament independently of the Sahidic Version.
5. Gothic Version: (Used in central and eastern Europe, done by a Christian). This version is known to have been made for the Goths in the AD 300's by the Christian bishop Ulfilas (AD 311-381).
6. Other Versions: (Done by Christians). These versions are known to have been made before the time of Muhammad, but only manuscripts from after Muhammad still exist.
- a. Ethiopic (Ethiopia): known to have been made in the AD 300's.
 - b. Armenian (Armenia): known to have been published in AD 411 and revised and republished in AD 436.
 - c. Georgian (Georgia): known to have been made circa AD 500.
 - d. Nubian (Between Egypt and Ethiopia): known to have been made in the AD 500's.
7. Portions of the Old Testament: (Done by Jews and Samaritans) Portions of the Old Testament were translated by Jews and Samaritans for various reasons. These

are known to have existed but no manuscripts preceding Muhammad have been found.

- a. Onkelos' version of the Torah, AD 150-200: done from Hebrew to Aramaic.
- b. Jonathan ben Uzziel's version of the Prophets, circa AD 322: done from Hebrew to Aramaic.
- c. Samaritan Pentateuch, a Hebrew version dating back to the 100's BC at least. Though not actually a translation, it was kept in a different style of script from the other Hebrew versions of the Old Testament.

Before 600 AD (Muhammad's time) the Old Testament had been translated into many languages by Jews and Christians, and the whole Bible by Christians. These translations were spread over a geographic area comprising Eastern and Northern Africa, Palestine, the Middle East, Soviet Central Asia, Asia Minor, and Western Europe. The content of all of these translations is of the Old Testament as we have it today.

F. Present day translations

Currently, the complete Bible has been translated into 307 of the world's present languages. The New Testament by itself has been translated into an additional 766 languages. 1014 additional languages have at least one book of the Bible translated into their language. These are of the 6,691 languages known to be in use today.(21) Work is also being done to translate the Bible into many more of these 6,691 languages. All of these have been done with the purpose of accurately conveying the meaning of the original languages into ordinary speech that people can understand.

G. Conclusions

Translating the Bible has been done from antiquity. Translations have always been viewed as the Word of God insofar as they accurately convey the meaning of the original languages. Contemporary versions of the Bible are translations, not alternative Bibles. The history of these translations and their geographic distribution show that in the centuries preceding Muhammad corruption of the Bible would have been impossible. The major translations of the Bible in use today are faithful renderings of the original biblical texts.

VII. Jesus as the Messiah

The Old Testament predicts the figure of the Messiah in great detail. Jesus claimed to be this Messiah, he fulfilled all the predictions in the Old Testament, and his disciples and Apostles filled the world at their time with the news that He was the true Messiah. Some of the major things predicted are that he would:

<u>Prediction</u>	<u>Predicted</u>	<u>Fulfilled</u>
be born of a virgin	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:18,24,25
as a descendent of Abraham	Genesis 22:18	Matthew 1:1
through Isaac	Genesis 21:12	Matthew 1:2
and Jacob	Numbers 24:17	Matthew 1:2
of the tribe of Judah	Genesis 49:10	Matthew 1:2
of the family of David	Jeremiah 23:5	Matthew 1:1
be born at Bethlehem	Micah 5:2	Matthew 2:1
be called Immanuel ("God with us")	Isaiah 7:14	Matthew 1:23
be a prophet	Deuteronomy 18:18	Matthew 21:11
be a priest	Psalms 110:4	Hebrews 5:5,6
be a judge	Isaiah 33:22	John 5:30
be a king	Jeremiah 23:5	Matthew 27:37
be preceded by a messenger	Isaiah 40:3	John 1:23
be smitten and spit upon	Isaiah 50:6	Matthew 26:67
be killed with thieves	Isaiah 53:12	Matthew 27:38
be buried in a rich man's tomb	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-60
rise from the dead	Psalms 16:10	Matthew 28:6; Acts 2:31

VIII. The Theme of Sacrifice

A. Sacrifice is a crucial concept in the Bible.

Sacrifice is mentioned at the very beginning in Genesis, was codified for Israel in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, and is the central religious and national obligation throughout Israel's history as contained in the Old Testament. Israel as a nation and as individuals lived by the truth concerning blood sacrifice that ***"without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."*** (Hebrews 9:22, NIV). God spoke of this to Moses as recorded in the Torah, ***"For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."*** (Leviticus 17:11, NIV)

The sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed forward to a perfect sacrifice by the Messiah that would atone for the sins of mankind. God inspired the prophet Isaiah to write 700 years before Jesus' birth concerning the Messiah:

1. *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."* (Isaiah 53:5, NIV)
2. *"But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:5, NIV)
3. *"We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all."* (Isaiah 53: 6, NIV)
4. *"Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, Because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."* (Isaiah 53:12, NIV)

Jesus fulfilled this perfectly in his life, his death on the cross, and his resurrection. It is the unanimous message of the New Testament, the Gospels and all the other books, that Jesus, as the Messiah, died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay for the sins of mankind. Jesus, as a true prophet of God, predicted his own death on the cross at least 16 times. He also predicted his resurrection. This message of forgiveness of sins in Christ's atoning death is the message that Jesus gave his disciples to preach to the world.

B. Conclusion

The books of the New Testament have been regarded as the Holy Scriptures since the days of the Apostles. They have always been regarded as the authoritative record of Jesus' life and teaching. There is no evidence that Jesus ever wrote a book Himself that was lost or changed into the existing New Testament. All available manuscript and historical evidence supports this view.

IX. Final Conclusions

In view of the preceding evidence, before the time of Muhammad, corruption of the Biblical texts would have been impossible for ten reasons:

1. Since before the time of Jesus, the Jews have regarded the books of the Old Testament as the Word of God. Since the days of the Apostles, the Christians have regarded the books of the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God. There is no evidence that any other books were regarded by them as their Scriptures.
2. Christians and Jews were spread throughout the world with their texts. They had no opportunity to gather all the texts and change them or to authorize one text and destroy all the others.

3. There were too many copies of the Biblical texts in circulation to change.
4. The texts were in too many different languages for a change to be made.
5. Christians and Jews were hostile to each other. No agreement could have been achieved as to changes to be made.
6. Differing sects within Christianity and Judaism would have disagreed with mainline groups. A uniform set of alterations could not have been made among the Jews or among the Christians.
7. The Jews have never accused Christians of changing the Old Testament text. And in Christianity's first six centuries of existence, no one accused the orthodox Christians of corrupting their texts.
8. There is no satisfactory reason to explain why the Jews or Christians, who both deeply valued preserving written Scriptures, would want to change their texts to the degree it would take to agree with Muslim assertions. There was no sufficient motive for them to attempt to change
9. Jesus himself held the Old Testament to be without error. He also promised his disciples that he would give them revelation through the Holy Spirit. There is an unbroken chain of reliable testimony from the closest disciples of Jesus to Christians today that the Bible we possess is the authentic Word of God.
10. The contents of the Old and New Testaments testify to the trustworthiness of the Bible in that they show remarkable agreement about Jesus. The Old Testament records vivid and precise predictions of the Messiah's life and ministry, and the New Testament records their fulfillment in Jesus.

No other Scripture can live up to this standard of preservation. The burden is on critics of the Bible to present objective evidence that shows corruption. If someone wishes to accuse Christians of corrupting the Scriptures then let them bring forward the originals that we may see the differences. This booklet is an attempt to objectively examine the evidence that the Bible has been preserved throughout its long history. This author invites the reader to present any evidence that he or she feels has not been explored or has not been objectively examined.

Also, this has been written from the conviction we must all search for truth and ask hard questions of our holy books. Our eternal destinies depend on answers to these questions. If they are not asked and answered, one's eternal destiny is in peril from ignorance or prejudice. May God bless you, the reader, as you examine the rival claims of Scripture. God does want to lead us into His truth.

