

Book Review
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The Bible On Trial by Wayne Jackson, Christian Courier Publications, Stockton, CA, 2009, 294 pp., \$19.95, paper, ISBN: 1-932723-11-0.

In *The Bible On Trial*, Wayne Jackson fulfills a personal quest to answer for himself and, hopefully many others, the questions skeptics have raised about the Bible. From the time he was a teenager, Jackson had to discover for himself if the Bible was God's Word. The fruits of this pursuit are now published in this book.

The book is comprised of twenty-three chapters, an epilogue and an extended bibliography. Each of the chapters explores a different aspect of the reliability of the Scriptures. Some of the topics are: the inspiration of the Scriptures, the reliability of the Old and New Testaments, the unity of the Bible, Bible contradictions, accuracy of the Scriptures, miracles, modernism, destructive criticism, the New Testament use of the Old Testament, the apocrypha, and the integrity of the Biblical text.

The reader will find this book easy to read and understand. It is packed with useful information that can be developed into Bible class material or sermon material. It is organized in a useful way as indicated by a perusal of the table of contents and many subtopics are listed to make it a useful tool for topical analysis.

In the introduction, Jackson distinguishes between abstract revelation and concrete revelation. Abstract revelation has to do with God's presence as made known through His handiwork (creation). Concrete revelation has to do with God's revelation of Himself through the Bible. It is the latter that forms the subject area for this book. The creation is a marvelous testimony to God's wisdom and power. The Bible is equally wondrous. Its treasures are many and produce marvelous insights into man's origin, nature, history, salvation, and destiny.

In chapter one, Jackson addresses *the Nature of Credible History*. Christianity is rooted and grounded in history. It is documented by the written Word and is established as genuinely from God. An important question is addressed in this chapter, "How do you distinguish between genuine history and myth? (p. 2). After discussing the nature of history, Jackson gives the following guidelines for determining genuine history: (1) eye-witness testimony; (2) second-hand testimony; (3) oral tradition; and (4) corroborating societies. How does this relate to the New Testament records? The eight writers of the New Testament pass the credibility test. They were eyewitnesses and had first-hand knowledge of the events that they wrote about (in addition to being guided by the Holy Spirit).

Chapter two tackles the question of reliability and credibility of the New Testament writers. Jackson gives the following criteria for a *bona fide* witness: competency, knowledge, and integrity (the character of the witness). He applies these criteria to the New Testament writers and concludes, "Thus, they were testifying as witnesses—not grandstanding! Witnesses indeed. Incomparable witnesses! Entirely credible witnesses! They pass the legal test with unparalleled excellence. Believe them!" (p. 24).

Chapter three focuses on the inspiration of the Bible. Jackson mentions three internal proofs of the inspiration of the Bible: (1) the unity of the Bible; (2) the accuracy of the Bible and (3) Bible prophecy. Each of these areas is treated in more detail in subsequent chapters (the

unity of the Bible in chapter five; the accuracy of the Bible in chapter nine; and Bible prophecy in chapter four).

Chapter four deals with the definition and delineation of predictive prophecy. Predictive prophecy is “a miracle of knowledge, a declaration, or description, or representation of something future, beyond the power of human sagacity to discern or to calculate, and it is the highest evidence that can be given of supernatural communion with Deity, and of the truth of a revelation from God” (Horne 1841, 1.119 as quoted by Jackson, p. 38). Predictive prophecy involves: proper timing, specific details, and exact fulfillment. Jackson gives specific examples of predictive prophecy and illustrates the various aspects of this important part of the Bible. He discusses primary and secondary fulfillment of prophecy; typology in Scripture, and the amazing accuracy of some of the Bible prophecies.

In chapter five, Jackson takes a closer look at the unity of the Bible. He identifies a unity of theme, plan, doctrine, and facts. The Bible is comprised of sixty-six books written over a period of 1600 years by as many as forty different writers. How did they produce a book that exhibits perfect harmony and unity? Obviously, God guided these men to write what He desired to be revealed and recorded.

Chapter six takes a look at Bible contradictions. Jackson answers these questions: What is a contradiction? Does the Bible contradict itself? Aristotle gave a classic definition of a contradiction, “That the same thing should at the same time both be and not be for the same person and in the same respect is impossible.” When considering any statement in the Bible these four things should be carefully analyzed: (1) Is the same thing or person under consideration?; (2) Is the same time period in view?; (3) Is the language employed that seems self-contradictory employed in the same sense?; and (4) supplementation is not contradiction (pp. 60-67).

Chapter seven and eight take a look at the silence of the Scriptures as an evidence of their inspiration. Jackson develops chapter seven by giving many illustrations of brevity in the sacred accounts of historical events or omissions of details about individuals or gaps in our knowledge of various objects or people in the Bible. The Bible was not written from the standpoint of mere human interest. It was written to set forth the divine purpose and intent of God. Chapter eight focuses on the apostles and the scarcity of information about them in the Biblical text.

Chapter nine addresses the amazing accuracy of the Bible. Human authors err. The authors of the Bible do not. Jackson illustrates both human error and divine accuracy. The Bible is accurate in details regarding science, medicine, history, people, places, and events.

If you’ve ever wondered about the nature of the Bible’s inspiration, you will want to examine chapter ten. Jackson affirms that the Bible is verbally inspired. You will want to read his arguments. Also, he affirms that transmission and translation do not destroy inspiration (pp. 108-109). Whenever the New Testament writers or the Lord Himself quote from the Septuagint version of the Old Testament Scriptures, they do so authoritatively and refer to the copies of the books of the Old Testament as Scripture.

Chapter eleven develops the difference between the miracles of Christ and modern miracles. The miracles of Christ exhibit eight characteristics mentioned by Jackson: (1) they were subject to sense perception; (2) they were performed in the presence of a wide variety of witnesses (some of these were enemies to Christ); (3) they were independent of any secondary causes; (4) they produced instantaneous results; (5) Jesus never failed in attempting to work a miracle; (6) they were characterized by a stately dignity; (7) they were not denied by Jesus’ contemporaries; and (8) not one of Jesus’ disciples ever defected and then attempted to expose

Him as a fake. Jackson proceeds to identify the characteristics of modern day miracles. Some instances of “faith healing” are fakes and have been exposed as such. Some people claim healing when in fact, nothing was really wrong with them (their illness of psychosomatic). Some modern day healings can be explained on the basis of spontaneous remission—an unexpected and unexplained withdrawal of symptoms and inexplicable disappearance of the ailment. Some physicians err in their diagnosis. There are no alleged “miracles” being performed today by Pentecostals or others of “Christian” persuasion that are not also claimed by various cults and “non-Christian” sects. (pp. 119-122).

Chapter twelve is an interesting chapter pitting Jesus against the modernists. Sub-topics include: the creation, the flood, the fate of Sodom, the plagues, manna, the brazen serpent, and Jonah and the great fish.

In chapter thirteen, Jackson deals with modernism’s assault on the miracles of the Bible. The modernist rejects the miracles of the Bible as unscientific. Jackson dissects some of the attacks made by noted Scottish scholar, William Barclay, on the miracles of Christ. Barclay looked for naturalistic explanations that simply do not fit the facts of the miracle accounts.

Jackson introduces the reader to Biblical Criticism in chapter fourteen. He defines such terms as critical study, radical criticism, liberal theology, modernism and its sub-topics, form criticism, the two-source theory, and pseudonymous literature. In the field of apologetics, it is crucial to understand basic definitions of these terms and the fields of study they involve. Jackson treats them simply and introduces the student to the terms and in later chapters he illustrates some of the areas of concern.

Chapter fifteen takes up the problem of radical criticism and the New Testament. The author addresses the synoptic problem in this chapter and deals with the mysterious “Q” document. He also deals with the critic’s attack on the authorship and dates of several of the remaining books of the New Testament including some of Paul’s writings.

Chapter sixteen discusses destructive criticism and the Old Testament. Jackson explores the higher critics’ abuses of the miraculous, the Pentateuch, and the book of Isaiah. Jackson closes this chapter with a parody of the critics written by J. W. McGarvey in 1893 that will bring a smile to your face.

In Chapters seventeen and eighteen, the author tackles the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament. “It is estimated that about ten percent of the New Testament has been taken from the Old Testament—either by direct quotations or general allusions” (p. 190). In chapter eighteen, he gives a more detailed analysis of the use of the Old Testament in the Gospel of John. Fourteen passages of Scripture are considered. This is a marvelous study and has been incorporated by Jared Jackson in an audio format as a part of the Fortify Your Faith Gold project currently being done through Courier Publications. Wayne Jackson is the instructor for this audio series. It is available to members of the Gold Newsletter only at this time (2009).

Jackson takes up the topic of the Canon of the Scriptures in chapter nineteen. What does the word “canon” mean? How do we know that the Bible contains sixty-six books and no more?

Following this chapter, Jackson looks at the books referred to as Apocrypha. “The Apocrypha is a collection of documents, generally produced between the second century B.C. and the first century A. D. which were not a part of the original Old Testament canon” (p. 237). Jackson lists fourteen of these books (pp. 237-238) and states that seven of these Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, I Maccabees, and II Maccabees are included in the Roman Catholic editions of the Bible. The Catholic Council of Trent (1546) affirmed the canonicity of these books, as found in the Latin Vulgate, and condemned those who reject them.

Should these books be included in the Canon of the Bible? Jackson gives the following facts: (1) There is abundant evidence that none of these books was ever received into the canon of the Hebrew Old Testament; (2) The apocryphal books are not in those most ancient works that allude to the Old Testament Scriptures; (3) The apocryphal books were produced in an era when no inspired documents were being given by God (from Malachi to the prophet John the Baptist). (4) Jesus Christ and his inspired penmen of the New Testament never once quoted from any of the apocryphal books; and (5) the apocryphal books make no direct claim to inspiration.

Chapter twenty-one raises and answers the question, “Why is That In The Bible?” Jackson examines information in the Bible that upon first consideration might seem irrelevant or unimportant. But, upon closer examination, it is quite meaningful. He considers genealogies, strange laws, and some examples of alleged trivialities.

In chapter twenty-two, the integrity of the Biblical text is examined. One example will suffice to illustrate the importance of this investigation. Let’s compare Isaiah 53 with the Masoretic text of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Of the 166 words in Isaiah 53, there are only seventeen letters in question. Ten of these letters are simply a matter of spelling, which does not affect the sense. Four more letters are minor stylistic changes, such as conjunctions. The remaining three letters comprise the word “light,” which is added in verse eleven, and does not affect the meaning greatly. Thus, in one chapter of 166 words, there is only one word (three letters) in question after a thousand years of transmission and this word does not significantly change the meaning of the passage (Geisler and Nix 1986, 263, quoted by Jackson, p. 260). The New Testament text is equally sound.

The final chapter examines the relationship between modern science and the Bible. Is the Bible scientifically obsolete? Jackson demonstrates that the Bible is accurate whenever it addresses areas of true scientific knowledge. While some may argue that organic evolution is “science,” it is really false or pseudo-science and must not be confused with true science. Since God is the author of the Bible and of Creation, we would expect that the Bible and science would be found to be in harmony rather than conflict with each other.

In the epilogue, Jackson takes up the topic of the relevancy of the Bible. The Bible addresses man’s most urgent need--salvation from sin—and consequently, it will always be relevant to man’s life and future destiny.

The bibliography given in the back of the book is extensive and shows the diversity of reading required to generate *The Bible on Trial*. It serves as a “book list” for those who would like to enlarge their own knowledge of the critics and the apologists who meet them with answers that preserve faith in God and the Bible.