

Apologetics **(A look at the evidences for the Bible we have today)**

by

Kenneth Fortier

This article was written in response to a letter received from a Roman Catholic who was of the opinion that the Roman Catholic Church was the one who gave the Bible to the people. While I do not question his beliefs in Christ, I do take issue with his opinions on the Bible. Everything said in this article addresses topics he made statements on in his rather long letter to me. Please read it in light of this. Note: This article is also pertinent for those who are unaware of evidences backing up where and how we got the New Testament Scriptures.

A study of Christian apologetics can make a person very aware of his limitations. In writing this article we are aware, if you are the average person sitting in a church pew, that there is much you may have not read about the topic of this article; and a great deal more that you don't have available in your hands to study from. As apologist, we are very much aware that in short articles, such as this one, that we cannot expound in depth on any one topic, so, to express our understanding of the topic being addressed, we will necessarily have to be very brief in presenting the evidences to you.

Many young people who have been "taught" in our denominational churches often experience a lot of unexpected and unpleasant shocks when they enter college or the secular business world. The "church taught" doctrines and values that they had at one time accepted without any questions asked are quickly challenged: most of the time without any warning, and then those doctrines and values seem to carry no more weight than any other viewpoint. Why is this? It is because the doctrines and values taught really had no solid foundation behind them in most cases; and when they did, the foundational basis was never properly presented for any kind of deep understanding of the underlying facts that gave the foundation strength.

This article seeks to lay the basic foundation as given us by the facts underlying why we believe the Bible is an accurate presentation of the original manuscripts written by the writers of the Bible. We will seek to present the basic answers to the motto, "Why do you believe what you believe?" In presenting the reasons of "why," we will always give the answer from the highest authority available: The authority we will quote is not Christianity, not a church, not a religion, but God — the God of the Bible; the God who created all things, the God who says "I am who I am!"

The Bible, internally, makes it clear that it is God who is its Divine Author. He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and the one who keeps it going. It is God who created all living things. It is God who created man in his image. It is God who tells man what he needs to know. It is God who gives man direction and purpose for his life.

We are set for a rational defense of Christian truth from what God has revealed to us in his word. These are the days when all authority is being questioned, and rightly so in many cases. Christian truths are being rejected because they are not given any basis for

belief from what God said we are to believe. We intend on presenting the only basis for believing a truth—A “What sayeth the Scriptures?”

If you are a typical “church-goer” as we once were, you are probably a prime candidate for the school of Christian apologetics. Many Christians today are asking for some reasons, some explanations, some sensible answer to questions they bring up that the “church” either can’t or won’t answer. In either case the answers are not given. To want reasonable answer is no disgrace, nor is it a sin to want the truth, and then to want to obey it. The Christian faith rests upon facts, the central fact being the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ (See 1 Corinthians 15:3–4). All Christians are urged to have a “reasonable answer;” to be ready and willing to tell others why they believe what they believe; to tell of the hope that they have (See 1 Peter 3:15). Isaiah says, “Come now, let us reason together...” (Isaiah 1:18).

And so, we too say, “Come now, let us reason together.” And we accept the task of dealing with “what” you should believe and “why” it is so. Make no mistake, what the Bible says is our central issue, and we will not regress away from it. We stand on the Bible, and it is proven solid as a rock. In this short presentation of Biblical evidences, we will show that the Bible as we now know it was in circulation before any “Church Council” authorized the books it contains. What we will bring out is documented by history.

Early Patristic “Church Fathers”

Clement of Rome (c 50–105 AD)
Ignatius (50–110 AD)
Papias (c 70–130 AD)
Polycarp (70–156 AD)
Justin Martyr (c 100–165 AD)
Irenaeus (c 115–180 AD)
(and secular writers of all stripes)

Tertullian (c 160–245 AD)
Hippolytus (c 170–235 AD)
Origen (c 185–253 AD)
Cyprian (205–258 AD).
Eusebius (c 280–330 AD)
Clement of Alexandria (c 150–180 AD).

The writers listed above quote from the “books” of the New Testament as we have it today. In their quoting they used such words as, “as it is written,” “as (name) wrote,” “as it is said in Paul’s letter to (Romans, etc.)” It is very important to understand that these early writers could not have quoted from something that was not previously written!

It is important to remember that the early Christians were just as anxious to know which books were considered Scripture as we are today. In fact, they were in a better position to find out the truth than we are (although in some sense, we have better technology to build and find evidences, for we have all the various writings to look at). Many false books were rejected because they were unable to pass the close scrutiny which early Christians submitted them to. Because of this, we consider the ‘early’ testimony of greater value than the “modern,” which is called “criticism.” This is especially true since this criticism is often based upon presuppositions antagonistic to Scriptures, and upon worldly philosophical bias and theories.

These early writers, by their quoting what “was written.” give us the assurance that what we have in our hands today is the same as what they had then.

Documented New Testament Evidences

1. Ignatius: Quotes from 15 New Testament books.
2. Justin Martyr: Quotes 330 direct passages from the New Testament with 266 allusions to the book of the “Apocalypse — Revelations.”
3. Irenaeus: Quotes 1,819 times from 9 books and mentions all but 3 of the New Testament books.
4. Tetullian: Quotes 7,258 times from 21 of the New Testament books.
5. Hippolytus: Quotes 1,378 times from the New Testament books.
6. Origen: Quotes 17,922 times from 23 of the 27 books of the New Testament.
7. Eusebius: Quotes 5,176 times from 22 books and mentions the writings of the other five.

The total “quotes” of the New Testament by these seven writers alone are over 36,000. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that they did not quote verses as we do today, for the simple reason that “verse divisions” and “chapters” were not introduced until over 1,000 years later. They quoted passages or parts of them relating to what they were teaching or commenting on. From just the writers mentioned above, we can find all but eleven verses of our New Testament as we have it today. This is powerful evidence, and worthy of belief. Each one of these writers of antiquity, and many not mentioned, held these writings as the final authority of faith and morals. These Scriptures were held as their only rule and practice of faith. Can we do any less?

Canons or Catalogs

In the seven most widely recognized “canons” of Christendom, we find listed, by the years 206 AD, all 27 books of the New Testament as we have them today. A “canon” is simply a rule, sometimes listed as a law, a criterion, an official listing, of the books of the Bible. “Canonicity” is the right to be included in the Biblical canons and are also called “catalogs” or recognized books appearing in the Bible. The date 206 AD is a very conservative date and the evidence is present that presupposes an even earlier date. I am talking about the Muratorian Canon of 170 AD and of Marcion, who died in 160 AD. There is much revealed within, and much to think about in these earlier canons.

Marcion was a disciple of one of the churches in Rome before he broke off and became a leader of the group known as Marcionites, named after himself. Marcion believed that the New Testament should not reflect any Jewish thought, so he accepted the Gospel according to Luke and only ten of the letters of Paul. His New Testament had a total of eleven books or letters of which he erased words and passages that had Jewish thoughts in them. He then rejected such books as Matthew, Mark, John, Acts, etc., because he considered them to contain “anti-Christian” thoughts. Obviously, he could not reject any books that were not yet written, which shows that these other books (such as he rejected) existed at his time. For this he was excommunicated by other congregations of Christians at Rome and surrounding areas. The 27 books of the New Testament were in

existence and being followed by other Christians. Even those rejected were accepted by others such as Irenaus, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, etc.

Looking at the Muratorian Canon, a list of books presented about 170 AD, we find some interesting facts for thought. This list is apparently the earliest catalog of New Testament books now extant. It was discovered in 1740 by an Italian named Muratori in an old Library at Milan, Italy. This catalog is fragmentary, some of it being lost. It must have originally listed more than what can be read today. I say this because (and I am not alone) it is apparent from the opening sentence that the first part lost to time had listed Matthew and Mark as preceding Luke. Luke is the first book decipherable and it is very apparent that others were in front of it. It lists all the other books until Hebrews. Hebrews, James, 1st and 2nd Peter and 1 John are blank. Since the list stops with Philemon and then continues with 2nd and 3rd John, it is very probable that the list included the books which seem to be omitted.

Note this: The author of this list quotes from 1st John, even though it is missing in the fragmented catalog itself. If this be true, then this Canon had listed the 27 books of the New Testament as we now know them to be.

Early Translation of the Greek Writings

At the time of Jesus, the Greek language was the most widely used form of speech and writing. It was also the trade language, as the majority of the Roman Empire used it in their dealing with others. Latin was only the official language for the elite of society in Rome. There was not much need to translate the Scriptures into other languages, although it was done for those not able to read Greek. I will mention only three of the most widely known ones.

Coptic Translations: As the Gospel spread to Egypt and the surrounding areas, people soon wanted the Greek writings in their own dialect. We find two early translations in the Egyptian languages. These, as the evidence demands, were made around the year 150 AD, and the translators probably knew some of the Apostles, especially the Apostle John.

The language used is called Coptic, which was the form of Egyptian writings in use at that time. This language was used for several dialects, especially the dialects of Bohairic and Sahidic. Northern Egypt used the Bohairic dialect and Southern Egypt used the Sahidic dialect. Both Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who taught in the northern city of Alexandria and the area around the Nile delta, probably used these translations as well as the Syriac and Old Latin translations of the Greek writings. The Bohairic dialect was probably the first of the Coptic translations as that is the area Christianity first spread to in Egypt.

Syriac Translations: The Syriac is a dialect of Aramaic, which was in use in Palestine as was the Greek at the time of Jesus. With the early conversion of Antioch in Syria, it is no surprise that we have translations in the Syriac dialect. Two of these translations are of great concern to us: The Old Syriac and the Peshitto Syriac. The Old Syriac was apparently made at or about 170 AD. We do not have a complete copy of this translation, but indirectly, some early church fathers make reference to some of the books it contained other than the four Gospels we have found. The Peshitto version was

probably not made until around the early 400's AD. This version is considered to be re-written from a text that dates back (some say 180 AD) before the time of its copying.

Old Latin Translations: Along the Mediterranean seacoast of Northern Africa, Christianity was spreading like a fire. So, along with the demand in Egypt, others wanted the Greek writings in their own language and dialects. Therefore, books began to appear in various places in the Latin dialects, especially around the city of Carthage. There were several dialects of Latin that differed from the Latin that was used in Italy. This is why these translations were called "Old Latin." The probable appearance of these translations or versions of the Greek was around 150 AD or there about. Two early church fathers, Tertullian and Cyprian, quoted from these Old Latin versions.

Council Meetings

The first Council was not called by a leader (bishop) of a church, but by the Roman Emperor Constantine. He did this because of strife among different congregations of Christians concerning the Deity of Jesus, whom God made both Christ and Lord. There is a lot of history that should be mentioned here, but the only thing I want to bring out is that the Emperor Constantine was not a Christian in any sense of the word at this time. He did not even get baptized until he was on his death bed, and that was many, many years later.

The date was 325 AD, and Constantine's main purpose was to keep peace among all his citizens, the Pagans and Christians alike. This Council was held at Nicea, and what is very odd about it is that the Church of Rome was not in attendance at its sessions. There was no such person as the Pope who was to be its head or presiding official: its head was the Roman Emperor who was not a Christian. Its purpose was the topic of Christology — the Trinity. Rome had no say in anything it brought out as something to believe on. It never "authorized" any list of New Testament books, but only affirmed the ones already in use and given to them from their fathers.

In 393 AD there was a Council called at Hippo. Many say that this was the second "ecumenical" Council, but there were other meetings before this. I call your attention to the second one held at Constantinople in 381 AD by the Roman Emperor Theodosius the Great for one, and others could be mentioned. In this Council of 381, only 150 Elders (not yet called Bishops) called Metropolitans, were in attendance. Rome again was not represented. At the Council of 393, the books of the Bible were mentioned, but not as an authorization. The list was made up of the books handed down by the ones that knew the Apostles and it is they who were the ones called "church fathers."

The next Councils worth mentioning are the ones at Carthage in 397 and in 419 AD. These two Councils likewise give us a list of the books and letters used by the churches that are exactly as we have them today. They also make it clear that such a list had been given to them by the "fathers," who knew the Apostles. Once again, the Roman Church was not represented or recognized as the seat or the head of the Churches.

What I bring out is binding upon no one further than his own knowledge and conscience leads him to accept it as valid and true. I shall love all those who confess Jesus as the Christ even though they don't concur with me, just as I love those who do

agree with me. The evidences just given in very abbreviated form are given for a purpose. That purpose is to show you that the Bible was not given “by the church,” but by chosen men of God “to the church.”

As you can see, the Roman Catholic Church had nothing to do with what books were to be included in the Bible. While it is true that the Papacy insisted that the Apocrypha writings be included in the Bible centuries later, even Jerome, who translated the Greek and Hebrew books into the Late Latin version (called the Latin Vulgate Bible), refused to include them in the Canon of the Bible, and other than the Apocryphal books, it remained the same as the lists mentioned earlier.

Those in the church who say, “Our Roman Catholic Church gave the Bible to the people and authorized which books were Canon.” Those who say this are very ignorant of history, especially Church History. I realize that those who say this are zealous for their institution, but they are zealous for the wrong reasons and are without knowledge. “They know not why or what they speak of.” I do not bring this out to condemn, but to rebuke and to set the record straight. Read what the Apostle Paul says in 2 Timothy 3:16–17.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Paul says ALL; gives us what for; and then lets us know the reason why: “So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” What else is there?

The Apostle Peter says in his letter, 2 Peter 1:20-21 that

“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophets own knowledge. For Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”

Peter tells us that the Scriptures did not come from any man’s imagination or knowledge, but that they wrote as the Holy Spirit prompted them. They wrote as God inspired them.

The evidences with the conclusions mentioned are overwhelming, to say the least, and there is much more. They are not all given in this short presentation, but are available for you to check into in the libraries across the United States — in our English language. Every word that we have in our Bible is trustworthy, providing that the translators actually translated them into our English language — which is not done in most Bibles today. The basic message of Christ — and what is necessary to salvation — is found in every Bible regardless of them not being translated word for word in our English language today. You can believe and be assured that what is written is truly from God as he moved men to write through revelation and inspiration. To ignore what is said is to ignore God. As Jerome, the one who translated the Greek and Hebrew writings into the Latin version, said: “To be ignorant of Scriptures is to ignore Christ.” I say AMEN!

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