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(1996)**

The Argument from the Bible (1996)

By Theodore M. Drange

Almost all evangelical Christians believe that the writing of the Bible was divinely inspired and represents God's main revelation to humanity. They also believe that the Bible contains special features which constitute evidence of its divine inspiration. This would be a use of the Bible to prove God's existence within natural theology rather than within revealed theology, since the book's features are supposed to be evident even to (open-minded) skeptics. Furthermore, since a divinely inspired work must be true, those features are thereby also evidence of the Bible's truth, and thus can be used in support of Christianity as the one true religion. When expressed that way, the reasoning can be construed as an argument both for God's existence and for the truth of the gospel message from the alleged special features of the Bible. We may refer to it as "the Argument from the Bible". Although almost all evangelical Christians agree with it at least to some extent, it is an argument that is for the most part ignored by professional philosophers of religion. One explanation for such neglect is that the argument can be easily refuted. In this essay/outline, I shall try to sketch how such a refutation might be formulated, though I am sure many will feel that I am attacking a strawman. (I believe there are millions of such "strawpeople" out there!)

1. The Argument Formulated

The Argument from the Bible is usually regarded as a kind of "cumulative-case" argument. It may be formulated as follows:

- (1) The Bible contains a large number of prophecies of future events which have been remarkably fulfilled.
- (2) The Bible does not contain any unfulfilled prophecies.
- (3) The only reasonable explanation for the above facts is that God used his foreknowledge to make the prophecies and inspired the authors of the Bible to record them.
- (4) The Bible contains a convincing eye-witness account of the resurrection and subsequent appearances

of Jesus of Nazareth.

(5) The only reasonable explanation for the above fact is that Jesus was and is a divine being, which shows the truth of the Bible and its gospel message.

(6) The Bible contains no contradictions.

(7) The Bible contains amazing facts about the planet earth, compatible with modern science, which were unknown in ancient times. Also, the Bible contains no conflicts with modern science or errors of a factual nature.

(8) The Bible contains a perfect morality, and no ethical defects.

(9) The only reasonable explanation for facts (6)-(8), above, is that the ultimate author of the Bible is God himself.

(10) Putting together results (3), (5), and (9), above, we may infer that the Bible is not a purely manmade work, but divinely inspired, which establishes the truth of Christianity and its gospel message.

Other premises are sometimes appealed to in the formulation of the argument. For example, Henry M. Morris places much emphasis on the alleged uniqueness of the Bible. [1] He also mentions what he takes to be remarkable numerical designs in it. [2] But for our purposes, the given formulation should suffice. It includes what are regarded to be the main factors within the Argument from the Bible.

Premises (3), (5), and (9) might be challenged by suggesting alternate explanations for the given data. An appeal might be made, for example, to the possibility of ESP or precognition on the part of some humans in the case of (3), or the phenomenon of spontaneous remissions and resurrections of some humans in the case of (5), or simply the exceedingly high intelligence of the Biblical authors and editors in the case of (9). But for our purposes here I shall ignore such challenges and simply focus on the argument's basic premises, which are its premises (1), (2), (4), and (6)-(8). If those steps are erroneous and do not express facts, then premises (3), (5), and (9) can be attacked on the grounds that what they call "facts" are not that but errors instead. What I put forward is merely a sketch. Details to fill out the sketch are provided elsewhere. [3]

2. Alleged Fulfilled Prophecies

There are hundreds of alleged prophecies in the Bible, most of them in the Old Testament, which are supposed to have been remarkably fulfilled, thereby showing the divine inspiration of Scripture. I shall here look at just a few of them.

(I) Bethlehem

Consider, first, Micah 5:2 (or Micah 5:1 of the *Tanakh*), which is supposed to prophesy that the Messiah will be born in the town of Bethlehem. According to the New Testament, Jesus was born in Bethlehem (Mt 2:1) and that was a fulfillment of the Micah prophecy (Mt 2:5-6, John 7:42). However, there are many problems with that:

(1) The verse in Micah may not be referring to a town at all, but a clan. David had been from old times described as "the son of the Ephrathite of Bethlehem" (1Sa 17:12). The verse in Micah states, "out of you [i.e., the clan, Bethlehem Ephrathah or Bethlehem of Ephrath] will come for me one who will be ruler

over Israel." It may be that all Micah intended there was to affirm that the Messiah will be a descendant of David.

(2) Jesus was claimed to be a (bodily or blood) descendant of David (Ro 1:3), but it is unclear how that could be. According to both Matthew and Luke, Mary's husband Joseph was a descendant of David (though they disagree about the exact genealogy, as discussed below). However, both Matthew and Luke deny that Joseph was Jesus's father, so their genealogies of Joseph (Mt 1:2-16, Lu 3:23-38) should not be regarded as genealogies of Jesus. Matthew erred when he called it that (Mt 1:1).

(3) The prophecy seems further not to apply to Jesus, for it says that the Messiah "will be ruler over Israel". Jesus was not any ruler over Israel. In fact, he himself is supposed to have denied that his kingdom was of this world (John 18:36). Also, the ruler is to make Israel a secure place to live (Mic 5:4), but that certainly did not happen. It is understandable why Jews, reading Micah, believe that their Messiah has not yet come.

(4) Even if the prophecy were taken to refer to the town of Bethlehem, there is room for doubt as to whether Jesus really was born there. The birth narratives in Matthew and Luke are inconsistent with each other at various points. Furthermore, both stories contain dubious elements. Matthew's story of the magi who followed a star (2:1-10) seems far-fetched. And the story in Luke 2:1-5 about Mary and Joseph's journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem to participate in a Roman census seems contrived. According to historians, the Romans never conducted the sort of census that Luke describes there, requiring people to travel to the birthplace of their ancestors, nor would such a requirement have much point.

For these reasons, the alleged fulfillment of the Micah prophecy by Jesus is quite doubtful. It certainly cannot be taken to be evidence of the divine inspiration of the Bible.

(II) The Virgin Birth

Another alleged prophecy that was claimed in Matthew 1:22-23 to have been fulfilled by Jesus is based on Isaiah 7:14, which is said to predict a certain virgin birth. But there are many problems with that.

(1) The Hebrew word "almah" which is used in the Isaiah verse does not mean "virgin" but "young woman". It is correctly translated in the *Tanakh*, the *Revised Standard Version*, the *Revised English Bible*, and the *New Jerusalem Bible*, but is incorrectly translated by the *King James Version*, the *New International Version*, and the *New American Bible*. It is also incorrectly translated by Matthew, who probably relied upon the incorrect translation in the Septuagint. There is another Hebrew word, "bethulah", which definitely means "virgin". Since a virgin birth is such an extraordinary event, presumably Isaiah would have used that other word if indeed he really meant to say that the woman is a virgin.

(2) The sign mentioned in the Isaiah verse pertains to a specific woman, known to both speaker and listener (believed by many historians to be Isaiah's wife), who is already pregnant, not some unspecified woman who is to become pregnant. The correct translation (from the *Tanakh*) reads "Look, the young woman is with child and about to give birth to a son." It was a sign given to Ahaz, the king of Judah, in the eighth century B.C. regarding some events in what was then the immediate future. It had nothing to do with the Messiah or with events in the far distant future.

(3) Part of the sign to King Ahaz was that the child will be named "Immanuel". Since that name means "God with us", it was supposed to show Ahaz that God was on his side. But, despite Matthew's

unreasonable claim that Jesus would be named "Immanuel" (Mt 1:23), Jesus was not named "Immanuel", but rather "Jesus" (as Matthew himself declared at 1:25).

(4) It seems unlikely that Isaiah would have meant to refer to a virgin birth, since that concept was totally foreign to the Israelites. Nowhere does it appear in Judaic theology or within the Judaic conceptual framework. If Isaiah had intended to introduce the idea, it would have been for the first time within the entire history of the Israelite people. Presumably he would in that case have used the clearer word "bethulah" instead of "almah", as mentioned above, and further, he would have said much more about such a remarkable event. The idea of a virgin birth was, however, a common notion among some other ancient groups, including the Greeks and Romans. Many famous people and mythical heroes were said, by one group or another, to have been born of a virgin. Among them were Julius Caesar, Augustus, Aristomenes, Alexander the Great, Plato, Cyrus, the elder Scipio, some of the Egyptian Pharaohs, the Buddha, Hermes, Mithra, Attis-Adonis, Hercules, Cybele, Demeter, Leo, and Vulcan. For this reason it seems likely that Matthew and the Greek translators of the Septuagint did not discover the virgin birth idea in Isaiah, but imposed it upon the text. It was out of sheer ignorance that it was made one of the five "fundamentals" of the Christian faith in the early Twentieth Century by those who came to be called "fundamentalists".

(III) The Donkey

It has been claimed that, according to Zechariah 9:9, the Messiah is to come riding into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey and that Jesus did indeed fulfill that prophecy (Mt 21:1-7, John 12:14-15). [See also Mk 11:2-7 and Lu 19:30-35.] That ride into Jerusalem is often entitled "the Triumphal Entry". There is a slight problem in that Matthew speaks of two donkeys, whereas each of the other three gospels mentions only one. [Matthew may have misunderstood Zec 9:9 to be referring to two donkeys, rather than just one. Also, it is unclear whether, when Matthew wrote "Jesus sat on them", he meant to imply that Jesus rode both animals simultaneously, circus-style.] But let us not dwell on the discrepancy regarding numbers. There are more serious difficulties with the alleged prophecy, as follows:

(1) Zechariah describes the person who rides the donkey as "the king of the Daughter of Zion and the Daughter of Jerusalem" ("the king of Zion and Jerusalem" in the *Tanakh*). But it is hard to see how such a title could properly be ascribed to Jesus, since the Jews for the most part rejected him and he never claimed to be their king.

(2) In the next verse (Zec 9:10), it says (in the *Tanakh*) that the one who rides the donkey will banish chariots from Ephraim, horses from Jerusalem, and the warrior's bow, and that "he shall call on the nations to surrender, and his rule shall extend from sea to sea and from ocean to land's end". It is hard to see how any of that could apply to Jesus of Nazareth. Some say that the great peace that Jesus will bring and the kingdom over which he will rule is a thing of the future, but that is irrelevant in the present context, which is the issue of prophecies already fulfilled. It seems clear that the gospel writers' attempt to depict Jesus as the king who rides into Jerusalem on a donkey is purely contrived and is a failure, at least so far as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy is concerned. Thus, it lends no support whatever to premise (1) of the Argument from the Bible.

(IV) The Betrayal

According to many, it was prophesied in the Old Testament that the Messiah would be betrayed by an unfaithful friend for 30 pieces of silver, which would later be thrown into God's house and used to buy a

potter's field (Ps 41:9, Zec 11:12-13), and that this was precisely what happened to Jesus. It is said that Judas betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver but later, feeling remorse, returned the money by throwing it into the temple, and that the money was eventually used to buy the potter's field (Mt 26:15, 27:3-10). But there are many problems with this, as follows:

(1) None of the Old Testament passages in question relate to the Messiah. In the passage from Zechariah, it is the author who is paid the 30 pieces of silver by good people for doing good work, which is just the opposite of what was supposed to have taken place in the case of Judas. Nor is there any reference to the Messiah in the verse from Psalms. In fact, it is made clear in a preceding verse (Ps 41:4) that the one who is betrayed (i.e., the author, David) is himself a sinner, so that could hardly apply to Jesus.

(2) Matthew claims (27:9-10) that the purchase of the potter's field had been prophesied by Jeremiah, but there is absolutely nothing about that in the Book of Jeremiah, and that is why the passage from Zechariah is usually appealed to instead. It was perhaps a slip of the pen by Matthew.

(3) However, the translation of the relevant part of Zec 11:13 in the *Tanakh* just reads "I took the thirty shekels and deposited it in the treasury in the House of the Lord." There is no reference there to throwing the money, nor is there any reference to a potter or to a "potter's field". So the alleged prophecy in Matthew does not appear in Zechariah either. It seems to be a figment of Matthew's imagination.

(V) John the Baptist

Some other Old Testament verses are supposed to be related to the alleged messianic prophecies. Mt 3:3, 11:10, and 17:10-13 (and parallel verses in other gospels) take Isa 40:3, Mal 3:1, and Mal 4:5, respectively, to be prophecies of John the Baptist. But there are problems with that:

(1) Isa 40:3 is followed by verses that tell of great events (the leveling of mountains and the glory of God to be witnessed by all mankind), and that certainly did not happen in the time of John the Baptist.

(2) In Mal 3:1, God is supposed to be speaking and saying that a messenger would be sent to "prepare the way" before *him* (God). But Mt 11:10 has stated the verse incorrectly, trying to make God say that the messenger would be sent before someone else. So the verse does not actually say what Matthew claims. One plausible interpretation of the original verse is that it is referring to Malachi himself, since the Hebrew name Malachi means "my messenger".

(3) Mal 4:5 says, "I will send you the prophet Elijah", and Mt 17:12-13 takes that to refer to John the Baptist. However, John the Baptist denied being Elijah (John 1:21). Also, the next verse (Mal 4:6) declares that, following the coming of Elijah, fathers and children will be reconciled or else God will "come and strike the land with a curse". But neither event took place following John the Baptist, so that part of the alleged prophecy was not fulfilled. Jesus himself set family members against one another (Mt 10:21,35-36, Lu 14:26), which runs counter to Mal 4:6.

For these various reasons, it does not appear that any of the given Old Testament verses made any sort of reference to John the Baptist. Again, there is no evidence here that any Biblical prophecies were fulfilled at about the time of Jesus of Nazareth.

(VI) The Suffering Servant

Among the alleged messianic prophecies are ones contained within the description of the "suffering servant" of Isaiah 53. And some of the alleged prophecies contained within that chapter claimed to have

been fulfilled by Jesus are the following [with verse numbers indicated]:

- (1) The Messiah's message would not be believed, supposedly fulfilled by Jesus at John 12:37-38.
- (3) The Messiah would be despised and rejected, supposedly fulfilled by Jesus in that his own people did not believe in him, according to John 1:11, 7:5.
- (5) The Messiah would be wounded, supposedly fulfilled by the scourging of Jesus at Mt 27:26.
- (7) The Messiah would be silent before his accusers, supposedly fulfilled by Jesus at Mt 27:12 (and Ac 8:32-35).
- (9) The Messiah would have a grave provided for him by a rich man, supposedly fulfilled for Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea at Mt 27:57-60.
- (12) The Messiah would be arrested as a criminal (which is perhaps Jesus' own interpretation at Lu 22:37) or perhaps that the Messiah would be crucified with criminals, supposedly fulfilled by Jesus at Mt 27:38 and Mk 15:27 (with Mk 15:28 inserted later) and Lu 23:32.
- (12) The Messiah would make intercession for his persecutors, supposedly fulfilled by Jesus at Lu 23:34.

But there are many problems with taking Isa 53 in such a way, among which are the following.

- (1) According to Isa 53:3 in the *Tanakh*, the suffering servant was "despised [and] shunned by men". It seems doubtful that that is fulfilled by Jesus just in virtue of the fact that his own people did not accept him, for he apparently was widely accepted by the common people elsewhere. According to Lu 4:15, he taught in the synagogue and everyone praised him. And later, huge crowds supposedly followed him, and he was described as making a "Triumphal Entry" into Jerusalem (Mt 21:8-11; John 12:12-13,17-19).
- (2) Verse 3 in the *Tanakh* also declares that the suffering servant was "familiar with disease", and verse 4 says that he was "stricken by God", where the Hebrew word for "stricken" is one that is used in the Hebrew Scriptures to stand only for leprosy (as at Le 13:3,9,20 and 2Ki 15:5). But Jesus is not known to have suffered from leprosy or any other disease, so those verses are not applicable to him. It may even be part of some forms of Christian doctrine that Jesus needed to be perfectly healthy in order to adequately play the role of "sacrificial lamb" (which by law needed to be "without blemish"). It is clear that the suffering servant of Isa 53 could not adequately play such a role.
- (3) As for Jesus being silent before his accusers (thereby satisfying verse 7), that seems not to work either. Verse 7 says (twice): "He did not open his mouth." But according to John 18:33-37, 19:11, Jesus said *much* to Pontius Pilate. In each of the four gospels Jesus opened his mouth and said something before his accusers. Hence, Jesus did not actually fulfill that part of the prophecy.
- (4) In verse 9 it says of the suffering servant "his grave was set among the wicked, and with the rich, in his death." It is unclear how that applies to Jesus, for there were no other bodies in the tomb in which Jesus' body was placed. The verse definitely does not say that the servant would have a grave provided for him by a rich man, so that part of the alleged prophecy is sheer invention.
- (5) According to verse 10, "the Lord chose to crush him by disease, that if he made himself an offering for guilt, he might see offspring and have long life, ..." That seems totally inapplicable to Jesus, for Jesus was not crushed by disease, nor did he see any offspring, nor did he have a long life.

(6) Isaiah 53 does not actually mention the Messiah. In fact, when we look closely at the chapter, it is hard to find anything in it that *is* applicable to either the (Jewish) Messiah or to Jesus. Verse 1 does not actually say that the servant's message would not be believed, but merely asks, "Who can believe what we have heard?" There seems to be no prophecy there at all. Nor is there any indication that the servant would be arrested as a criminal or scourged or crucified with criminals or make intercession for his persecutors. None of that is in there. Verse 6 does say, "the Lord visited upon him the guilt of us all," but there are other interpretations of that than the Christian one.

(7) There is a Judaic interpretation of Isa 53 that seems plausible. The suffering servant is the nation of Israel which is represented by King Uzziah, who was its king in Isaiah's time and who died of leprosy. According to Shmuel Golding, Isaiah's message may have been: "Here is your leprous king, who is in type suffering under God's hand for you the backslidden servant nation of Israel" (which explains verse 6). Uzziah was taken away from the royal palace because of his affliction as a leper and spent his remaining years in isolation, which fits verse 8. Golding says the following:

Israel is portrayed as a suffering servant on account of its anointed leader being stricken with leprosy. Israel, like the leper, is a suffering servant of God. Both have suffered humiliation at the hand of their fellowmen: the leper because of his unsightly appearance; Israel through its defeat at the hands of the Babylonians. The gist of the message is that Israel like the leper has suffered, but nevertheless will retain its identity in the form of the exiled Jewish people and that they will prosper in this form. [5]

This interpretation of Isaiah 53 seems preferable to the Christian one because it does not suffer from drawbacks (1)-(6) mentioned above. It would also better explain the many changes of tense that occur in the chapter. And Israel is indeed referred to as "God's servant" (e.g., at Isa 49:3). However, the given interpretation does not make the chapter into a prophecy so much as an explanation of Israel's situation at around the time of Isaiah. At the very least, it shows, I think, that Isaiah 53 is not a clear example of a fulfilled prophecy (or set of fulfilled prophecies) in the Bible. So it is not any good support for premise (1) of the Argument from the Bible.

(VII) Tyre

Leaving the realm of alleged prophecies associated with Jesus, we could look at a couple of them dealing with history. I think that these are the more promising ones, for their fulfillments, if any, cannot be charged with having been made up by such imaginative writers as Matthew. As I said in Chapter 5 of the book, if God were to put impressive fulfilled prophecies into the Bible, then he would use fulfillments that become part of secular history, and which would already be known about by those to whom the missionaries go to preach the gospel message.

One writer who mentions historical-type prophecies is Josh McDowell. He discusses twelve cities that were prophesied to be destroyed. [6] The first of them is the city of Tyre, the destruction of which was prophesied in Eze 26:3-21. It was said that, after being destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, Tyre would never be rebuilt and would never be found again (Eze 26:14,21, 27:36, 28:19). According to McDowell, all of the prophecies regarding Tyre and the other cities he talks about were fulfilled in history. He goes on to say the following:

We can then draw only one conclusion, and that is that God inspired the writing of every one of these prophecies. ... He has predicted multitudes of events to happen in the future. They have come true exactly as predicted, even though in some cases thousands of years

were involved for the fulfillment. God has proven that He is our supernatural God with all wisdom. We have no alternative but to believe. [7]

I shall not try to deal here with all of the prophecies mentioned by McDowell, only the one related to the city of Tyre. But I think that similar considerations can be raised with regard to all of them. Let us look at some of the problems with the Tyre prophecy.

(1) Tyre had two parts, an island part and a mainland part. Nebuchadnezzar only managed to destroy the mainland part. According to historians, he failed to capture the island city of Tyre, despite a 13-year siege (585-572 B.C.). That was why Nebuchadnezzar was unable to pay his soldiers, as reported in Eze 29:18. [That in itself refutes the earlier prophecy. Ezekiel is in effect admitting its failure. He should have scrapped it before completing his book.] It was not until the attack by Alexander the Great more than 200 years later that the island part of Tyre was also destroyed. However, since Ezekiel did not mention Alexander, only Nebuchadnezzar, it is hard to see how that later attack fulfills any part of his prophecy.

(2) According to historians, Tyre recovered quickly following the attack by Alexander. In 64 B.C., it became part of the Roman Empire and prospered. It is mentioned in the present tense in the New Testament. [8] Christian buildings were constructed there in the Fourth Century A.D. and during the Crusades, but Muslims later destroyed them.

(3) Tyre still exists today. It is a city on the coast of Lebanon, to be found on any map of that country. It has been mentioned in recent times in connection with retaliatory raids upon Hezbollah forces in Lebanon by Israel in their ongoing warfare.

It does not seem, then, that Ezekiel's prophecies came true. He said that Tyre would "be no more" but that did not happen. Similar considerations could be raised in connection with all the other prophecies that McDowell and others have claimed to have been fulfilled in history.

(VIII) The Nation of Israel

Although McDowell does not mention it, Henry Morris takes the restoration of the nation of Israel in the twentieth century as a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. [9] He cites Ezekiel 37:21 in which God says:

I am going to take the Israelite people from among the nations they have gone to, and gather them from every quarter, and bring them to their own land. (Tanakh)

The obvious objection is that Ezekiel is not here talking about the twentieth century but is predicting the return of the Jews from their captivity, exile, and dispersal at the hands of the Assyrians (in the 8th and 7th centuries, B.C.) and the Babylonians (in the 7th and 6th centuries). That return occurred in 537 B.C., shortly after the book of Ezekiel was written. In itself, it is a prophecy that became fulfilled, though not a particularly remarkable one. The book was written during the exile, and there may have been good evidence available to Ezekiel that the exile would soon come to an end. Other parts of the prophecy, that the returning Jews would faithfully observe God's laws and that they would live in their restored homeland forever (Eze 37:24-28) were not fulfilled. It is understandable why McDowell stayed clear of this alleged prophecy, though it is sometimes cited by missionaries today. As a prophecy about an event 2500 years in the future, it would certainly be an impressive one if it could be adequately supported.

Undaunted, Morris cites Isaiah 11:11-12, which reads:

In that day, My Lord will apply His hand again to redeeming the other part of His people from Assyria - as also from Egypt, Pathros, Nubia, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and the coastlands. He will hold up a signal to the nations and assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. (Tanakh)

Morris claims that Isaiah's use of the word "again" indicates that he is referring to the twentieth century, A.D., and that "the first time" would be the return from the Babylonian captivity. But there is a more plausible interpretation: that the word "again" is referring to what was then (at the writing of Isaiah) a future return from the Assyrian and Babylonian exiles and that "the first time" would be the Exodus (from Egypt, many centuries earlier).

Although I have not looked at all the alleged remarkable fulfilled prophecies, my conclusion is that none of them is what its advocates maintain. Many of them are not prophecies at all. Of the ones that are prophecies, almost all remain unfulfilled. And the few that are fulfilled prophecies are not remarkable, for one reason or another. Therefore, premise (1) of the Argument from the Bible has not been adequately supported and may reasonably be doubted.

3. Unfulfilled Prophecies

According to premise (2) of the Argument from the Bible, there are no unfulfilled prophecies in the Bible. We have already seen some counter-examples to that claim. Let us look at a few others, beginning with a type that is more like a Biblical contradiction:

1. According to Ge 2:17, Adam will die the same day that he eats the fruit, but that did not come about, since, according to Ge 5:5, Adam lived to age 930. [Note that the same Hebrew word for "die" is used as elsewhere in the Old Testament, standing for physical death.]
2. According to Ge 4:12,14, Cain will be a fugitive and a vagabond, and constantly subject to assassination, but that did not come about, for, according to Ge 4:16-17, Cain had a wife and family, and lived in the same area all his life, and built a city.
3. According to Jos 17:17-18, Ephraim and Manasseh will drive out the Canaanites, but according to Jg 1:27-29, they did *not* drive out the Canaanites.
4. Jer 34:5 prophesied that Zedekiah will die in peace, but according to 2Ki 25:7 and Jer 52:10-11, that did not happen. Instead, he saw his sons killed, was carried off in chains, blinded, and eventually died in prison.
5. Am 7:17 prophesied that Amaziah's sons will die by the sword, but according to 2Ch 26:1,21, Amaziah's son Uzziah died of leprosy.
6. According to Jon 3:4, Nineveh will be overthrown in 40 days, but then God changed his mind about having Nineveh overthrown. (See Jon 3:10.)
7. According to Mt 12:40, Christ will be buried for *three* nights, but he died on a Friday and by Sunday the tomb was empty. Between Friday and Sunday, there are just *two* nights, not three.
8. According to Mt 19:28 and Lu 22:30, all 12 disciples will sit on 12 thrones as judges. But actually, not all 12 disciples could reign, for Judas, who was one of them, was excluded. (See Mt 26:24-25.)

9. In Mt 26:34 and Lu 22:34, it is prophesied that before the cock crows, Peter will deny Jesus three times, but according to Mk 14:66-68, Peter denied Jesus only once before the cock crowed.

10. According to Lu 23:43, the thief will be with Christ in paradise on *that* very day. But Christ's body was buried that day and, according to Ac 2:27,31, his soul went to hell, not to paradise.

More will be said about Biblical contradictions in Sections D.4 and D.5, below. Some other examples that are a little more like unfulfilled prophecies are the following.

11. According to Ge 15:18, 17:3,8, and Dt 1:7-8, Abraham's descendants will own all the land between the Nile River and the Euphrates River, but it never happened: they never owned all that land. God broke his promise, as conceded in Ac 7:5 and Heb 11:13.

12. According to Ge 49:13, the tribe of Zebulun will dwell at a seashore, but, instead, as may be gathered from various later verses as well as extra-Biblical sources, they dwelled inland, not at any seashore.

13. According to Jos 8:28, the city of Ai will be destroyed forever. In actuality, Ai did have later inhabitants. (See Ezr 2:1,28 and Ne 7:32.)

But these still look a little bit like Biblical contradictions. I think the very best examples of unfulfilled prophecies are ones like the following.

14. According to Ex 3:8, the Israelites will live in a large land, flowing with milk and honey, and according to 2Sa 7:10, they will not be disturbed anymore, but as a matter of historical fact Israel (and vicinity) has been a relatively small and mostly barren land, and the Israelites have been continually harassed from all sides.

15. Many verses prophesy that the throne of David will endure forever and that there will never be a time without a man upon that throne. But in point of historical fact, the Davidic line of kings ended with Zedekiah. 450 yrs. later, the Maccabeans had a brief reign. But for 2000 years, there has been no Davidic king.

16. According to Isa 14:23, Babylon will become wet, but that never happened. According to Jer 51:36, Babylon will become totally dry, but that never happened either. According to other verses, [11] Babylon will never be inhabited by people again, but in fact Babylon has been continually inhabited by people since that time. [Note 1Pe 5:13.] It is now part of Iraq.

17. According to Isa 17:1, Damascus will be destroyed, but in fact Damascus is one of the few ancient cities that has *never* been destroyed. [The fact that so many were destroyed makes prophecies of the future destruction of ancient cities rather unremarkable.] If Isaiah had predicted that Damascus would never be destroyed, then *that* would have been remarkable.

18. According to Isa 19:5, Eze 30:12, and Zec 10:11, the Nile River will dry up, and according to Eze 29:9-12, Egypt will become desolate for 40 years, with no man or animal passing through it and with all Egyptians dispersed, but as a matter of fact the Nile River has *never* dried up and in the whole history of Egypt no such calamitous events have ever occurred.

19. According to Isa 19:18, five Egyptian cities will speak the language of Canaan, but linguists and archeologists assure us that no Egyptian cities have ever spoken the language of Canaan.

20. According to Isa 29:17, Lebanon will become a fruitful field, but that has never happened to Lebanon!
21. According to Isa 34:9-10, Edom (the land between the Dead Sea and Gulf of Aqaba) will become burning pitch: no one will ever pass through it again. But in truth that has never happened to Edom. People have passed through it for thousands of years.
22. According to Isa 52:1, the uncircumcised and unclean will never enter Jerusalem, but in fact such people have continually entered Jerusalem for thousands of years.
23. According to Jer 42:17, Jews who choose to live in Egypt will all die and leave no remnant. But history shows that Jews continued to live there for centuries, later establishing a cultural center at Alexandria.
24. Zep 3:13 prophesied that the remnant of Israel will not sin or lie or be afraid, but in truth they were never so moral nor so fearless.
25. Many verses [12] prophesy that Christ's second coming will occur soon. Some of them specifically say that it will be within his listeners' lifetime, i.e., before *that* generation (there with Jesus) passes away. But in truth more than 19 centuries have elapsed since then and the event still has not occurred. Of all the examples of unfulfilled prophecies, this one strikes me as the one that is clearest and most powerful.

With all these unfulfilled prophecies, it is clear that premise (2) of the Argument from the Bible is false. It might be suggested that the argument dispense with its premise (2), but it serves an important purpose. With unfulfilled prophecies in the Bible, even if there had been some fulfilled ones, they would, in effect, have gotten "canceled out". The law of probabilities would allow some prophecies to come true, just as a matter of coincidence, provided that many of them do not come true. Thus, it is important for the advocate of the Argument from the Bible to insert premise (2). As it turns out, since in fact none of the alleged remarkable fulfilled Biblical prophecies really turn out to be that, all of the unfulfilled ones mentioned are a kind of "overkill". They could have been used for "canceling-out" purposes, but are not needed for that after all.

4. The Resurrection

According to premise (4) of the Argument from the Bible, the Bible contains a convincing eye-witness account of the resurrection and subsequent appearances of Jesus of Nazareth. The gospels do describe Jesus's execution and subsequent burial in a tomb, and they do claim that the tomb was later found to be empty and that Jesus appeared to his followers in bodily form. The main reason for calling them "eye-witness accounts" is that in Luke 1:2 it says, "they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses." There are, however, several problems.

First, it is generally conceded that the accounts of the resurrection were not actually written down until more than thirty years after the alleged event had occurred and that, prior to being written down, they were, in effect, rumors or stories which had been spread orally throughout the region. It is easy for such rumors to become embellished over time. Changes tend to occur in oral messages, even when their conveyers make every effort to pass them on accurately. So even if the resurrection accounts are based on what are said to be eye-witness reports, there is much room for doubt regarding them. An analogy would be the report of some event in history, such as the explosion and burning of the Hindenburg Zeppelin over Lakehurst, NJ, in 1937. If the very earliest written account of that event were published in,

say, 1967, then historians would be reasonably suspicious as to whether it really did occur, even if the account is based on alleged eye-witness reports.

Second, the event in question is supernatural or miraculous in character. That in itself makes it an event which calls for something more in support than just reports by a handful of alleged eyewitnesses. By analogy, if the explosion and burning of the Hindenburg Zeppelin were claimed to be followed by its miraculous reappearance out of nowhere, say, the next day, then historians would need far more than just some alleged eye-witness reports before they would include such an event (as an actual event, not merely a reported one) in their history books. Even if the alleged eyewitnesses were to show their complete sincerity, say, by passing lie-detector tests, that would still not sway historians. The event could still be some sort of mass hallucination or the product of the power of suggestion (as has been suggested in the case of the astronomical miracle at Fatima, Portugal in 1917).

Third, those who wrote the accounts of Jesus's resurrection were not reporters or historians. They were all motivated to win converts to their new religion, which was at that time a kind of Judaic cult. Even Luke, who says, "I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning" (1:3), was not a neutral investigative reporter, but a proselytizer for Christianity (mainly to the Gentiles). That is another fact about the writings which tends to cast doubt upon their objectivity and accuracy.

Fourth, the alleged resurrection appearances were only to Jesus's followers, not to his opponents. If the whole purpose of the resurrection had been for God to convey to the world the truth of the gospel message, as suggested in Mt 12:38-40, or at least the information that there is such a state as an afterlife, as suggested by St. Paul in 1Co 15:12-19, then the event was very badly staged. More people should have witnessed the crucifixion and certified that Jesus was really dead. [13] And certainly many more people than just a handful of his followers should have witnessed his return from the dead. This is a point made previously in the present book in connection with ANB.

Fifth, the Biblical accounts of the resurrection are not consistent and that tends to cast doubt on them. They contradict one another regarding such matters as how many women went to Jesus's tomb, whether it was still dark out, whether Mary Magdalene told people about the tomb, whether she went back to it with them, whether there was just one angel there or two, whether the angels were inside of the tomb or outside, whether they got there before the women and disciples, and what they looked like, whether there were guards at the tomb, whether Peter went there alone, whether Jesus appeared first to him (1Co 15:3-5), whether he appeared at all to Mary Magdalene, whether he appeared to her at the tomb, whether she was then alone, whether she recognized him immediately, and whether it was after the disciples were told, whether Peter went to the tomb before or after the others were told and whether he was alone, whether Jesus appeared specially to two disciples, whether they recognized him immediately, whether he later appeared to the others as the two were speaking or afterwards, whether he scolded the others for not believing the two, whether he appeared to the disciples just once or three times, whether the first appearance was in Galilee, whether they all recognized him immediately, whether he ascended to heaven right afterwards, whether he ascended from Jerusalem (Mark), Bethany (Luke), or Mt. Olivet (Acts), and whether he appeared to the Twelve, to over 500, and then specially to James (1Co 15:5-7).

Here are references to support the alleged contradictions involved in the Bible's account of Jesus's post-resurrection appearances:

Question Answers

1. How many women went to Jesus's tomb?

One - John 20:1-18

Three - Mk 16:1-8

Two - Mt 28:1-8

Many - Lu 23:55-24:10

(In what follows, the middle column supplies references for a "Yes" answer and the right-hand column supplies references for a "No" answer.)

Question	Yes	No
2. Was it still dark out?	John 20:1	Mt 28:1; Mk 16:2
3. Did Mary Magdalene tell any men about the tomb?	Mt 28:8; Lu 24:9-10; John 20:2	Mk 16:8
4. Did she go back to the tomb with any of them?	John 20:2-11	Mt 28:1-10,16; Mk 16:8-14; Lu 24:9-12
5. Was there just <i>one</i> angel at Jesus's tomb?	Mt 28:2-5; Mk 16:5-6	(There were <i>two</i> .) Lu 24:4-5; John 20:11-13
6. Were the angels <i>inside</i> the tomb?	Mk 16:5; John 20:11-12	(The <i>one</i> angel was <i>outside</i> .) Mt 28:2
7. Were there guards at the tomb?	Mt 27:62-66, 28:2-4,11-15	Mk 15:44-16:10; Lu 23:50-24:12; John 19:38-20:12
8. Did the angel(s) look like lightning?	Mt 28:2-4	(Humanlike) Mk 16:5; Lu 24:4
9. Did the angel(s) get to the tomb first?	Mk 16:5	Lu 24:2-4; John 20:1-12
10. Did Peter go <i>alone</i> ?	Lu 24:12	John 20:2-6
11. Did Jesus appear <i>first</i> to Cephas (Peter)?	1Co 15:3-5	Mt 28:9; Mk 16:9; Lu 24:9-15; John 20:14
12. Did he appear at all to Mary Magdalene?	Mt 28:9; Mk 16:9 John 20:11-14	Lu 24:1-51; 1Co 15:3-8
13. Did he appear to her <i>at</i> the tomb <i>after</i> the disciples were told?	John 20:1-14	<i>(Not at the tomb, and before they were told)</i> Mt 28:1-9; Mk 16:1-10

14. Was she <i>alone</i> when Jesus appeared to her?	Mk 16:9-10; John 20:10-14	(The other Mary was with her.) Mt 28:1-9
15. Did she recognize him immediately?	Mt 28:9; Mk 16:9-10	John 20:14
16. Did Peter go to the tomb <i>before</i> the others were told about it?	(But he was not alone.) John 20:1-3,18	(It was <i>after</i> , and he went alone.) Lu 24:9-12
17. Did Jesus specially appear to <i>two</i> disciples?	Mk 16:12; Lu 24:13-31	Mt 28:16-18; John 20:19-29
18. Did they recognize him immediately?	Mk 16:12-13	Lu 24:13-16
19. Did he later appear <i>as</i> they spoke to the others?	Lu 24:36	(It was <i>after</i> .) Mk 16:14
20. Did he scold the others for not believing them?	Mk 16:14	Lu 24:35-51
21. Did Jesus appear just <i>once</i> to the disciples?	Mk 16:14-19; Lu 24:36-51	(It was <i>thrice</i> .) John 20:19-26, 21:1-2,14
22. Was the 1st appearance to them in Galilee?	Mt 28:9-10,16-18	Lu 24:33-36,49-51; John 20:18-26; Ac 1:4
23. Did they all recognize him immediately?	Mk 16:14-20; John 20:19-20	Mt 28:16-17; Lu 24:36-41
24. Did he ascend to heaven immediately afterwards?	Mt 28:9-10,16-20; Mk 16:14-19; Lu 24:36-51	John 20:19-26, 21:1; Ac 1:1-9; 1Co 15:3-8
25. Did he appear to them twice, eight days apart?	John 20:19-26	Mt 28:9-20; Mk 16:14-19; Lu 24:36-51
26. Did he appear to the Twelve, to over 500, & then specially to James?	1Co 15:5-7	Mt 27, 28; Mk 16; Lu 24; John 20, 21
27. Did Jesus ascend to heaven from Bethany?	Lu 24:50-51	(From Mt. Olivet) Ac 1:9-12; (Jerusalem) Mk 16:14-19

28. Was Jesus the <i>only</i> one to ascend to heaven?	John 3:13	(Enoch and Elijah too) Heb 11:5; 2Ki 2:11
29. Did Paul's companions hear Jesus's voice?	Ac 9:7	Ac 22:9, 26:14

It is to be granted that Biblical inerrantists have tried to harmonize all of the various accounts of Jesus's post-mortem appearances in a way that would avoid the apparent inconsistencies. But the general consensus, I think, is that all such attempts have been failures. The topic of Biblical contradictions is of course complicated. Some apparent inconsistencies might be capable of being explained away by appeal to special interpretations. For example, Acts 26:23 seems to say that Jesus was the first to rise from the dead. (See also Re 1:5.) Yet we know there were many prior resurrections described in Scripture, [14] which implies an inconsistency. Perhaps the verse in question could be interpreted to mean merely that Jesus is the first to be resurrected following the atonement for mankind's sin, or something akin to that. It may be that some of the alleged contradictions listed above can be dealt with in some such fashion. But it seems unreasonable to think that all of them can be. I, for one, have never seen it done. As for premise (4) of the Argument from the Bible regarding a convincing eye-witness account of the resurrection, we have seen that there are many reasons of various sorts to doubt the accuracy of that claim.

5. *More Contradictions*

According to premise (6) of the Argument from the Bible, the Bible contains no contradictions. We have already seen above how that claim might be challenged. It might be objected that the alleged contradictions only concern trivial matters. However, there are also inconsistencies regarding the important matter of salvation, [15] so not all of them are over trivial matters. Furthermore, even the trivial contradictions are important in the present context. The fact that the Bible contradicts itself at all, whatever the matter may be, does make a lot of difference. It shows that God was not the author (or inspirer) of all of the Bible, which refutes the claim on the part of evangelical Christians (and Orthodox Jews) that he was. Without the Argument from the Bible to fall back on, evangelical Christian theology is in a heap of trouble with regard to many issues, as mentioned in the beginning of this appendix.

The importance of Biblical inerrancy to evangelical Christianity is borne out by the fact that the translators of the NIV translation of the Bible, all of whom are certified evangelicals, go through a lot of trouble to try to evade contradictions. For example, although all Hebrew manuscripts containing 2Ch 22:2 cite Ahaziah's age when he began his reign to be 42, the NIV translation of that verse gives the age as 22, to bring it into conformity with 2Ki 8:26. They justify this on the grounds that the Septuagint and some Syriac manuscripts give the figure as 22. But in just about all other cases they rely on the Hebrew manuscripts. It seems to be a departure from the task of translating from the Hebrew into English (which presumably is the translators' task) to engage in such juggling of the texts.

In any case, according to premise (6) of the Argument from the Bible, the Bible contains no contradictions. We have already seen in Sections D.4 and D.5, above, how that claim might be challenged. Here are some more counter-examples.

Questions and Answers

Question	Yes	No
1. Did fowl (birds) come out of the <i>water</i> ?	Ge 1:20	(Out of the ground) Ge 2:19
2. Did <i>two</i> of each kind of fowl enter Noah's ark?	Ge 6:19-20	(It was <i>seven</i> of each.) Ge 7:3
3. Does Satan ever tell the truth?	Ge 3:4-7,22	John 8:44
4. Did everyone speak the same language?	Ge 11:1	Ge 10:5,20,31
5. Was Salah the <i>son</i> of Arphaxad?	Ge 11:12	(His grandson) Lu 3:35-36
6. Will the earth last forever?	Ps 37:29, 104:5; Dt 4:40; Ec 1:4	Mt 24:35; 2Pe 3:10-11; Lu 21:33; Heb 1:10-11; 1Jo 2:17; Re 1:1
7. Did Abraham have just <i>one</i> son (Isaac)?	Heb 11:17	(Two) Ge 16:15; 1Ch 1:28; Ga 4:22. (Many) Ge 25:2; 1Ch 1:32
8. Was Keturah Abraham's <i>wife</i> ?	Ge 25:1	(His concubine) 1Ch 1:32
9. Were the Israelites in bondage for <i>400</i> years?	Ge 15:13;	(It was <i>430</i> years.) Ex 12:40
10. Did Potiphar buy Joseph from <i>Midianites</i> ?	Ge 37:36	(From Ishmaelites) Ge 39:1
11. Did the Israelites go from Kadesh to Mt. Hor, where Aaron died, & then to Zalmonah?	Nu 33:37-42	(They went from Beeroth to Mosera, where Aaron died, & then to Gudgodah.) Dt 10:6-7
12. Were Levites to begin to serve at age 30?	Nu 4:30	(Age 25) Nu 8:24

13. Was David Jesse's <i>seventh</i> son?	1Ch 2:15	(His eighth) 1Sa 16:10-11
14. Did David kill Goliath with a sling + a stone?	1Sa 17:50	(With a sword) 1Sa 17:51
15. Was <i>Ahimelech</i> the priest who gave David the bread?	1Sa 21:1,6, 22:20	(His son, Abiathar) Mk 2:25-26
16. Was it <i>Saul</i> who killed the Amalekites?	1Sa 15:7-8	(It was David.) 1Sa 27:8-9, 30:13-18
18. Did Saul enquire of God?	1Sa 28:6	1Ch 10:13-14
19. Did Saul die by his own hand?	1Sa 31:4-5	(By an Amalekite) 2Sa 1:4-10; (By Philistines) 2Sa 21:12; (By the Lord) 1Ch 10:14
20. Was it <i>God</i> who provoked David to number Israel?	2Sa 24:1	(It was Satan.) 1Ch 21:1
21. Did David take 700 horsemen from Hadadezer?	2Sa 8:4	(It was 7000.) 1Ch 18:4
22. Did David kill 700 Syrian charioteers?	2Sa 10:18	(It was 7000.) 1Ch 19:18
23. Were the 40,000 other victims <i>horsemen</i> ?	2Sa 10:18	(They were footmen.) 1Ch 19:18
24. To build his altar, did David pay 50 shekels of silver to <i>Araunah</i> for his threshing floor <i>and oxen</i> ?	2Sa 24:18,24-25	(He paid 600 shekels of <i>gold</i> to <i>Ornan</i> for the floor <i>alone</i> .) 1Ch 21:22,25-26
25. Did Israel have 640,000 more swordsmen than Judah?	1Ch 21:5	(Only 300,000 more) 2Sa 24:9
26. Were the pillars named Jachin & Boaz 18 cubits high?	1Ki 7:15,21	(35 cubits high) 2Ch 3:15,17
27. Did Solomon have 3300 foremen and 550 chief officials?	1Ki 5:16, 9:23	(3600 foremen and 250 chief officials) 2Ch 2:2,18, 8:10

28. Did he have 40,000 stalls for his horses?	1Ki 4:26	(Only 4000) 2Ch 9:25
29. Was the vol. of Hiram's cauldron 2000 baths?	1Ki 7:26	(It was 3000 baths.) 2Ch 4:5
30. Did Jehoram begin to reign in the 2nd year?	2Ki 1:17	(It was the 5th year.) 2Ki 8:16
31. Did King Josiah die at <i>Megiddo</i> ?	2Ki 23:29-30	(At Jerusalem) 2Ch 35:23-24
32. Was Jehoiachin age 8 when he began to reign?	2Ch 36:9	(He was 18.) 2Ki 24:8
33. Did Ahaziah become king in the 12th year of Joram?	2Ki 8:25	(It was the 11th year.) 2Ki 9:29
34. Was he then age 22?	2Ki 8:26	(Age 42) 2Ch 22:2 (in Hebrew sources)
35. Was Ahaz defeated by the kings of Israel and Syria?	2Ch 28:5	2Ki 16:5
36. Was it the <i>seventh</i> day that Nebuzaradan came?	2Ki 25:8	(The tenth day) Jer 52:12
37. Did 775 descendants of Arah return from exile?	Ezra 2:5	(It was 652.) Ne 7:10
[Note: there are <i>dozens</i> of other discrepancies between the lists in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7. Yet it seems to be the very same census, since their totals agree (Ezra 2:64-65, Ne 7:66-67).]		
38. Did Jesus descend from David through David's son <i>Solomon</i> and grandson <i>Roboam</i> ?	Mt 1:1-7	(Through David's son Nathan and grandson Mattatha) Lu 3:23,31
39. Was Joseph's father <i>Jacob</i> ?	Mt 1:16	(It was Heli.) Lu 3:23

<p>[There are many other discrepancies between the lists in Matthew 1 and Luke 3. Some say that the list in Luke shows Mary's genealogy, but the key expression in Lu 3:23 is clearly "son of Heli", not "son-in-law of Heli". The same word translated there as "son" was used throughout the entire list.]</p>		
40. Were Joseph and Mary <i>natives</i> of Nazareth?	Lu 1:26, 2:4,39	(They only went there later.) Mt 2:23
41. Did they go to Egypt?	Mt 2:14-15	(Directly to Nazareth) Lu 2:39
42. At Jesus's baptism, did the voice address <i>Jesus</i> ?	Mk 1:11	(It addressed the crowd.) Mt 3:17
43. Did Jesus go to <i>Cana</i> soon after his baptism?	John 1:29-36, 2:1-2	(To the wilderness for 40 days) Mt 3:13-17, 4:1-2; Mk 1:9-13
44. Was John the Baptist arrested <i>after</i> Jesus began his ministry?	John 3:23-24	(It was <i>before</i> .) Mk 1:14
45. While in prison, did John know who Jesus was?	John 1:25-36, 3:23-24	Mt 11:2-3
49. Did Simon & Andrew join Jesus <i>after</i> certain events took place?	Mt 4:12-20; Mk 1:14-18; Lu. 3:19-20, 4:14-31, 5:1-10	(It was <i>before</i> they took place.) John 1:35-42, 4:1-54
50. Could the disciples have shoes and staves?	Mk 6:8-9	Mt 10:10
51. Was it <i>six</i> days after his "there be some here" prophecy that Jesus took 3 disciples up a mountain?	Mt 17:1; Mk 9:2	(It was about <i>eight</i> days after, which is presumably 7, 8, or 9.) Lu 9:28
52. Did the centurion himself come to Jesus?	Mt 8:5-6	(He sent others.) Lu 7:3,6

53. Did James and John ask a favor of Jesus?	Mk 10:35-37	(It was their mother who asked it.) Mt 20:20-21
54. Did Jesus give signs other than that of Jonas?	John 3:2, 20:30; Ac 2:22	Mt 12:39; Mk 8:12
55. Did Jesus encounter just <i>one</i> possessed man?	Mk 5:1-20; Lu 8:26-39	(It was <i>two</i> .) Mt 8:28-34
56. Just <i>one</i> blind man?	Mk 10:46-52; Lu 18:35-43	(<i>Two</i>) Mt 20:30-34
57. Did Jesus heal the leper <i>before</i> going to Peter's house?	Mt 8:1-3,14-15	(It was <i>after</i> .) Mk 1:29-31,40-42
58. Was it near the <i>end</i> of his ministry that Jesus cleansed the temple?	Mt 21:10-12	(It was near the <i>beginning</i> .) John 2:11-15
59. Did Jesus curse the fig tree <i>after</i> going to the temple?	Mt 21:12	(It was <i>before</i> .) Mk 11:13-15
60. Did Judas reveal Jesus by a kiss, and did the crowd then take Jesus?	Mt 26:48-50; Mk 14:43-46	(Jesus revealed himself, and the crowd then fell back.) John 18:3-6
61. Was Jesus silent before Pontius Pilate?	Mt 27:13-14	(He said much.) John 18:33-37, 19:11
62. Did the soldiers clothe Jesus in <i>scarlet</i> (the color of royalty)?	Mt 27:28	(It was <i>purple</i> , the symbol of infamy.) Mk 15:17
63. Did Simon the Cyrenian bear Jesus's cross?	Mt 27:32; Mk 15:21; Lu. 23:26	John 19:16-17
64. Was Jesus offered wine mixed with myrrh to drink?	Mk 15:23	(It was vinegar mixed with gall.) Mt 27:34
65. Was Jesus reviled by <i>both</i> thieves on the cross?	Mt 27:44	(Only by <i>one</i>) Lu 23:39-43
66. Was the cross inscription a complete sentence?	Mt 27:37; Lu 23:38	(Just 5 or 8 words) Mk 15:26; John 19:19

67. Did it mention Jesus?	Mt 27:37; John 19:19	Mk 15:26; Lu 23:38
68. Was Jesus crucified at the <i>third</i> hour?	Mk 15:25	(The <i>sixth</i> or <i>ninth</i> hour) John 19:14-16; Mk 15:34
69. Were his last words, "It is finished"?	John 19:30	(They were "into your hands I commit my spirit.") Lu 23:46
70. Will all 12 sit on thrones?	Mt 19:28	(Not Judas.) Mk 14:18-21
71. Did Judas keep the money and buy the field?	Ac 1:18	(He returned it and the priests bought the field.) Mt 27:3-7
72. Did Judas hang himself?	Mt 27:5	(He fell & burst open.) Ac 1:18
73. Did Joseph of Arimathea <i>alone</i> bury Jesus's body?	Mk 15:45-46; Lu 23:50-53	(Nicodemus was with him.) John 19:38-42
74. Did Jesus want his apostles to baptize people?	Mt 28:19	1Co 1:17
75. Will doers of the law be justified?	Ro 2:13	Ro 3:20
76. Are people justified by faith alone?	Ro 3:23-28; Eph. 2:8-9	James 2:24
77. Are there any righteous people?	Ge 7:1; Job 1:1; Lu 1:6; Jas 5:16	Ro 3:10,23

6. *Factual Errors*

According to premise (7) of the Argument from the Bible, the Bible contains amazing facts about the planet earth, compatible with modern science, which were unknown in ancient times. One verse that is often cited in this regard is Job 26:7, which says that the earth is suspended upon nothing. That is indeed a remarkable insight, coming from an ancient writer. One wonders, however, what to make of it, since the same writer refers to "the pillars of the earth" (9:6, 38:6) and "the pillars of the heavens" (26:11). The idea that the earth rests on a foundation or pillars is also expressed at 1Sa 2:8 and Ps 75:3, 104:5. In addition, premise (7) of the Argument from the Bible declares that the Bible contains no conflicts with modern science or errors of a factual nature. We have already seen Biblical errors in the form of unfulfilled prophecies and contradictions. But the claim can also be challenged by appeal to dozens of other examples. Here are just a few of them:

(1) The Bible [16] implies that the earth is flat or that all of its inhabited surface can be seen at one time

from a single vantage point, which conflicts with what we know. Related to this is the Bible's frequent reference to "ascending to heaven", [17] which implies that the Biblical authors erroneously thought of the earth as a flat plane beneath a celestial dome.

(2) The Bible (1Ch 16:30; Ps 93:1, 96:10, 104:5) declares that the earth does not move, whereas we know for a fact that the earth does move.

(3) The age of the earth according to the Bible (computed from Ge 1, 5, & 11 and Lu 3:23-38) cannot be much over 6000 years, yet scientists have determined that the earth is 4.6 billion years old. The evidence that it is *way* over 6000 years old comes from many different fields and is overwhelming.

(4) According to Ge 1:16-17, the earth was already in existence when the sun and the stars were created, yet scientists have determined that the stars existed billions of years before the earth and that the sun also existed prior to the earth (which revolves around the sun).

(5) The Bible (Ge 1:11-19) has fruit trees and other plants created one day before the sun, but that is impossible. The earth without the sun would have been an inhospitable place for such plants as fruit trees. They could not have survived under such conditions for one minute, let alone a whole day.

(6) According to Ge 1:20-25, birds were in existence before reptiles and insects (things which "creep upon the earth"). But science has established that there were reptiles on the earth 150 million years before there were any birds and that insects go back another 100 million years before reptiles.

(7) The Bible (Ge 1:21-24) places whales in existence before "creeping things", but scientists have determined that the origin of whales is relatively recent, in geologic time, compared with such "creeping things" as reptiles and insects.

(8) According to Ge 1:12,21, there were fruit trees on the earth before there were any animals, but the fossil record proves that there were many animals on the earth hundreds of millions of years before there were any fruit trees.

(9) According to the Bible, there were no carnivores prior to the Fall (Ge 1:29-30; Ro 5:12,14,17; 1Co 15:21). But science has shown that carnivorous animals have existed for hundreds of millions of years. For example, some fossilized dung contains fragments of bone, teeth, and hair. The strontium content of some bones is that known for carnivores. And some fossilized teeth are sharp, as opposed to flat, etc. Even the fact that prehistoric humans had hunting tools disconfirms the Biblical account. Finally, from facts about the bodily makeup of such animals as spiders, fish, reptiles, felines, etc., it is clearly false that there was once a time when such animals were herbivorous.

(10) Genesis 1 describes the various species of animals on earth as being specially created in a short span of time. But science has excellent evidence that the various species of animals, incl. humans, have, instead, evolved over a very long span of time. [See "By Evolution, Not Creation", above.]

(11) According to Ge 1:21-25,31, the time span from the first appearance of fish on our planet to the first appearance of mammals was one day. But science has established that the actual time span was over a quarter of a billion years!

(12) Genesis describes magical things and events, such as magical trees (2:9, 3:24), a woman being created from a man's rib (2:21-23), a talking snake (3:1-5), etc. But we know that there never were such things or events.

- (13) According to the Bible snakes eat dust (Ge 3:14) or will eat dust (Isa 65:25). But the fact of the matter is that snakes do *not* eat dust.
- (14) Chapter 5 of Genesis has humans living more than 800 or 900 years. But we know that humans do *not* live anywhere near that long.
- (15) Genesis describes a worldwide flood that covered all the mountains on earth (7:19-20), but such a flood is impossible. Among other problems, there is nowhere from which such an enormous quantity of water (at least a half-billion cubic miles) could have come prior to the flood and there is no place to which it could have gone afterwards.
- (16) The Biblical story of Noah's Ark must be false since it conflicts with what we know about the behavior and needs of various animals and their current distribution around the planet. It maintains that eight people cared for (what must have totaled) at least a million different animal species on a closed boat for over a year. That is impossible! It is also impossible that all the species presently distributed around the world migrated within the past 4000 years from Mount Ararat in Turkey.
- (17) The Bible takes the story of Adam and Eve to be factual. [18] But scientists have excellent evidence that the story is factually incorrect. Apart from the inaccuracies regarding time, the fossil record shows that humans were not specially created but evolved from non-human primates.
- (18) According to the Bible (Ge 11:6-9), the various languages of the earth originated all at once at the Tower of Babel. But linguists have shown that languages have evolved over time at many different geographically separate places on earth.
- (19) According to Ge 17:17, Abraham's wife bore a child at age 90, and according to Ge 19:26, Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt. But such events are physically impossible. This is also true of dozens of other alleged miracles throughout the Bible. We know they are mythical rather than factual because they are contrary to natural law.
- (20) Taking the numbers supplied at Ex 12:37 and Nu 1:45-46, it could be computed that the Israelites' total population was about 3 million. Combining that with Dt 7:1, it may be calculated that the total population of Palestine was over 21 million. But scientists know that the population of Palestine was never anywhere near that figure.
- (21) Le 11:6 claims that hares chew the cud, which is known to be erroneous. Le 11:13,19 (and Dt 14:11,18) claim that the bat is a bird, which we know is false. And according to Le 11:20-23, there are four-footed birds and four-footed flying insects, but we all know that birds have two legs and insects have six legs. Also, according to Nu 22:28-30, an ass (or donkey) spoke, but we know that never happened.
- (22) According to Joshua 10:12-13, the sun stood still in the sky. The author probably thought of the sun as going around the earth, but even if we take it to mean that the earth suddenly stopped rotating on its axis, objects would have been hurled off by the centrifugal force, which didn't happen. Hence, the account is erroneous.
- (23) According to Psalm 19:6, the sun goes all over the heavens and nothing can escape its heat. But that is false. Today we know that some parts of the universe are totally unaffected by our sun.
- (24) The Bible contains many exaggerations. Consider, for example, the number of quail described in Nu

11:31-32. Even allowing that they came out of the sea (which we know did not happen), it has been computed to amount to 780 square miles of quail piled three feet deep. That is certainly an exaggeration. Also, we know there did not exist armies of 800,000 and war deaths of 500,000, contrary to 2Ch 13:3,17. And contrary to 2Ch 9:23-24, not *all* the kings of the earth visited Solomon, for at least those in China and in the Western Hemisphere did not. And it is not the case that 27,000 soldiers died when a wall fell on them or another 185,000 awoke one morning to find that they were dead, contrary to 1Ki 20:30 and 2Ki 19:35.

(25) The Bible (at least the KJV) treats such fictional animals as unicorns, cockatrices, dragons, satyrs, and fiery or flying serpents, as though they really exist. [19]

(26) According to Jonah 1:17, 2:10, a man lived for three days inside the belly of a fish (or a whale, according to Mt 12:40), but that is impossible.

(27) According to Mt 2:9, a star moved in the sky until it was directly over the town of Bethlehem, but we know that that is impossible.

(28) According to Mt 2:16, Herod had every child in the region killed who was under three years old, but there is good historical evidence that such an event never occurred.

(29) According to the Bible, [20] the cause of mental illness and various infirmities is possession by devils. But today we know that mental illness and infirmities have a different cause.

(30) According to Mt 17:27, Jesus prophesied that Peter would find a coin in the mouth of the first fish he catches in the sea by hook. It seems incredible that the prophecy was fulfilled. (The Bible does not inform us whether or not it was.)

(31) According to Mt 27:52-53, dead bodies emerged from graves and wandered around in Jerusalem and were seen by many. If such an event had ever occurred, there would have been some mention of it outside the book of Matthew. But there is no such mention by anyone else, anywhere. That is good reason to deny that the event ever happened. [It is also reason to suspect that Matthew embellished *many* of his accounts.]

(32) According to the Bible, the author of its first five books was Moses and the author of Psalms was David. [See references on this elsewhere.] Yet there is hardly any Biblical scholar today who would accept either of those claims. Apart from inconsistencies in style and content within those books, Moses' own death and burial and subsequent events are recorded in Dt 34:5-9.

Many other examples of the above sort could be cited. It seems quite clear that premise (7) of the Argument from the Bible, according to which the Bible contains *no* conflicts with modern science and *no* errors of a factual nature, has been refuted.

7. Ethical Defects

According to premise (8) of the argument, the Bible contains a perfect morality and no ethical defects. But that claim seems incompatible with the fact that God is described in the Bible as killing people for no good reason. We have already mentioned the many children killed in the Great Flood, in Sodom and Gomorrah, and in the ten plagues on Egypt (especially the last). Here are some additional examples of people whom God killed:

1. A man who refused to impregnate his brother's widow (Ge 38:7-10).
2. Two men who offered God incense that he had not authorized (Le 10:1-2).
3. A group of about 300 people who opposed Moses politically (Nu 16:1-35).
4. Another group of 14,700 who sympathized with the first group (Nu 16:49).
5. More people who complained about the food and other matters (Nu 21:4-6).
6. 24,000 more because of some who worshiped Baal (Nu 25:3,9).
7. The Amorites who besieged Gibeon (Jos 10:10-11).
8. Seventy men who looked into a box (1Sa 6:19).
9. Another man who, with good intention, touched the box (2Sa 6:6-7).
10. A man who refused to use his weapon against another man (1Ki 20:35-36).
11. Forty-two children who called Elisha "baldy" (2Ki 2:23-24).
12. 185,000 Assyrian soldiers (2Ki 19:35).

God also killed all of Pharaoh's horsemen in the Red Sea (Ex 14:26-28). He could instead have simply made their horses lame, which would have been far more effective than removing the wheels from the chariots so that the horses had to drag the chariots slowly along the ground (Ex 14:25). That would have also spared the horsemen.

In addition to killing people directly, God also ordered several people killed (despite his commandment not to kill). Here are some examples of people who died by God's order (and in some cases with God's help):

1. Three thousand of the Levites' brothers, friends, and neighbors, who had become unruly (Exodus 32:27-28).
2. All the men, women, and children in all seven of the tribes who were the Israelites' neighbors (Dt 2:34, 3:6, 7:1-2,16, 20:16-17). [Some Biblical verses imply that the Israelites numbered 2-3 million, which would make the total population of their neighbors more than 14 million. What God was here ordering, then, if we could go by those verses, was a kind of Holocaust.]
3. All the men, women, and children of the cities of Jericho, Ai, and dozens more cities and towns (Jos 6:21, 8:24-26, 10:26-42, 11:10-23, 21:44).
4. All the Amalekites, including children, and even animals (1Sa 15:3,18), [where Saul was severely punished for sparing some of them].
5. All the members of the house of Ahab and ministers of Baal within Israel, the latter accomplished through deception (2Ki 10:11-25), though approved by God (10:30).
6. All the citizens of Jerusalem, including children, who did not grieve and lament over sins committed in it (Eze 9:4-6).

It seems quite unethical for God to order the execution of so many people, whatever their offense might have been, especially in the case of the children, who were presumably innocent.

Closely related to the above is the extravagant use of capital punishment among God's chosen people. God ordered people put to death for such minor offenses as the following:

1. Consulting a witch (Le 20:6; Dt 18:11).
2. Blasphemy or merely having a different religion (Ex 22:20; Le 24:10-23; Dt 13:1-15, 17:2-5, 18:20; Jos 23:7,16; 2Ki 18:40).
3. Gathering sticks or kindling a fire on the Sabbath (Ex 31:14-15, 35:2-3; Nu 15:32-36).
4. Eating the wrong food (Ex 12:15,19; Le 3:16-17, 7:22,25-27, 17:10-16).
5. Being a disrespectful or disobedient child (Le 20:9; Dt 21:18-21).

It seems unethical to have laws that harsh. The laws of the ancient Israelites are hardly the model of morality that advocates of Dominion Theology (or Reconstructionism) make them out to be. It would have been impressive if the Bible had gone against the prevailing cultural norms and had forbidden slavery and the oppression of women. But it did not do that. The Bible condones slavery. [21] It also contains many rules that are discriminatory against women. [22] It is hard to find anything in the Bible that stands out as ethically noble from our point of view today.

In addition, according to the Bible, God also deceived people and caused evil. Some examples of that are the following:

1. He created communication problems between people (Gen, 11:7-9).
2. He sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and certain citizens for the purpose of vengeance (Judges 9:23-24).
3. He sent another evil spirit to torment Saul (1Sa 16:14).
4. He put a lying spirit into the mouths of all his prophets (1Ki 22:22-23).
5. He admitted creating disaster ("evil" in the KJV) (Isa 45:7). [See also Amos 3:6.]
6. He permitted people to have "statutes that were not good and laws they could not live by" (Eze 20:25).
7. He sent certain people a powerful delusion so that they would believe a lie (2Th 2:11).

God also apparently ordered stealing by having the Israelites plunder the Egyptians (Ex 3:22). He ordered the plundering of cities far away from Israel and the enslavement of their people (Dt 20:10-14). [The seven neighboring tribes were to be dealt with still more harshly, as indicated above.] He also ordered 32,000 female virgins to be taken as war plunder (half to go to the soldiers and half to the people) and 32 of them to be for himself (Nu 31:18-40). All of this is highly unethical, to say the least.

Even Biblical *doctrines* are unethical. A good case could be made that Adam and Eve were victims of entrapment and did not deserve their punishment. And the idea that children are born into the world somehow inheriting Adam and Eve's sin also implies an injustice. As for Jesus's alleged sacrifice for humanity, that too seems unethical. If people deserve a certain punishment, then they ought to receive it.

That is what justice is. To knowingly punish the innocent is always morally repugnant. Furthermore, the exclusivist threat of "accept Christ or else be damned for eternity" is unethical. People ought to be provided some way of "opting out" of the entire system. I would say that the most unethical Biblical doctrine of all is that of eternal damnation. [23] It is hard to understand how anyone who interprets the Bible to say that God keeps people alive for purposes of eternal torment, instead of simply annihilating them, could also suggest premise (8) of the Argument from the Bible. And yet there are such.

This sketch of how the argument might be attacked is admittedly in need of filling out, and that is something done elsewhere, as indicated above. But from the little that has been presented, I hope that the reader has become convinced of the total bankruptcy of the Argument from the Bible.

NOTES

[1] Henry M. Morris, *Many Infallible Proofs* (El Cajon, CA: Creation-Life Publisher, Inc., 1974), Chapters II and V.

[2] *Ibid.*, Appendix A.

[3] There are dozens of excellent sources for the purpose. Two recent ones are the following: C. Dennis McKinsey, *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Errancy* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1995) and A. J. Mattill, Jr. *The Seven Mighty Blows to Traditional Beliefs*, Second Edition (Gordo, AL: The Flatwoods Free Press, 1995).

[4] Shmuel Golding, *The Light of Reason*, volume II (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Institute of Biblical Polemics, 1989), p. 36.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 36.

[6] Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Revised Edition, Volume I (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1979), p. 267.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 320.

[8] Mt 11:21-22, 15:21; Mk 3:8, 7:24,31; Lu 6:17, 10:13-14; Ac 12:20, 21:3,7.

[9] Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-188.

[10] 2Sa 7:13,16; 1Ch 17:12,14; Ps 89:3-4,35-37; Jer 33:17.

[11] Isa 13:20; Jer 50:39-40, 51:26,29,37,43.

[12] Mt 4:17, 10:23, 16:28, 24:34; Mk 9:1,13,30; Lu 9:27, 21:32; John 5:25; 1Th 4:15,17; Re 3:11, 22:6,7,10,12,20.

[13] The theory that Jesus was not really dead when he was taken down from the cross has been prevalent. See, e.g., Hugh J. Schonfield, *The Passover Plot* (New York: Bantam Books, 1966). It should also be noted that Muslims deny that Jesus was crucified, mainly on the basis of a passage in the Qur'an (Surah IV:157). They usually conjecture that someone else was crucified in his place.

[14] 1Ki 17:21-22; 2Ki 4:32-35, 13:21; Mt 9:18-25; Lu 7:12-15; John 11:43-44.

[15] See Theodore M. Drange, "Biblical Contradictions Regarding Salvation", *Free Inquiry* 14 (Summer 1994), pp. 56-57.

[16] Isa 11:12, 42:5; Job 28:24; Jer 10:13, 31:37; Da 4:10-11; Zec 9:10; Mt 4:8; Re 1:7, 7:1.

[17] Jg 13:20, 20:40; Ps 68:18, 139:8; Pr 30:4; Isa 14:13; Mk 16:19; Lu 24:51; John 3:13, 20:17; Ac 1:9-11, 2:34; Ro 10:6; Eph 4:8-10; Re 11:12.

[18] In addition to Ge 2 & 3, see 1Ch 1:1, Mt 19:4-6, Lu 3:38, Ro 5:14-19, 1Co 15:22,45, 2Co 11:3, 1Ti 2:13-14, and Jude 14.

[19] Regarding unicorns, see Nu 23:22, 24:8; Dt 33:17; Job 39:9-11; Ps 22:21, 29:6, 92:10; and Isa 34:7. Regarding cockatrices, see Isa 11:8, 14:29, 59:5, and Jer 8:17. Regarding dragons, see Dt 32:33; Job 30:29; Ps 74:13, 148:7; Isa 13:22, 27:1, 43:20; Jer 9:11, 10:22, 14:6; and Mic 1:8. Regarding satyrs, see Isa 13:21, 34:14. And regarding fiery or flying serpents, see Nu 21:6; Dt 8:15; Isa 14:29, 30:6. Look these up in the KJV.

[20] Mt 8:28-33, 9:32-33, 12:22, 17:15,18; Mk 1:23-27,34, 5:2-13, 9:17-29; Lu 8:27-33, 9:39,42, 11:14-26, 13:11,16,32.

[21] Ge 9:25; Ex 21:2-6,20-21; Lv 25:44-46; Dt 15:12,17, 28:68; Jer 27:8,12; Joel 3:8; Eph 6:5-7; Col 3:22; 1Ti 6:1; Tit 2:9; 1Pe 2:18-21.

[22] 1Co 11:5-6, 14:34-35; Eph 5:22-23; 1Ti 2:9-14; Tit 2:5; 1Pe 3:1.

[23] See Isa 33:14; Mt 13:40-42,49-50, 25:41,46; Mk 9:43-48; Jude 6-7; Re 14:10-11.

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