

***Bibliology:
All About the
Word of God***

College Life Class, FBCG

Fall 2022





CHALLENGE FOR THE WEEK

Speak to someone asking:

“What do you believe about God, the universe, all those big questions of life? Just curious.”

After they answer, ask:

“So, **why** do you believe that?”

After they answer, just say:

“Thanks for sharing!”

When I was a student at Trinity during the mid-70s I saw an article posted on a bulletin board about a forthcoming book entitled *The Myth of God Incarnate*. It described how Prof. John Hick at the University of Birmingham had assembled a team of seven scholars who claimed that the divine Christ we read about in the gospels is a myth. In reality, they argued, Jesus of Nazareth never claimed to be the son of God or the Lord or any sort of divine figure. Of course, an event like Jesus' resurrection was out of the question as a literal, historical event. Accordingly, we need to jettison these false and outmoded beliefs.



I remember feeling irritated and frustrated by this article. *Why don't our New Testament scholars answer this stuff?* I thought. *Why does it go unchallenged in the press?* Little did I realize that a veritable revolution in New Testament scholarship was transpiring that would soon reverse such skepticism and establish the gospels as historically credible sources for the life and claims of Jesus.

Radical critics still get a free pass from the press today for their sensational assertions, but they are being increasingly marginalized within the Academy, as scholarship has come to a new appreciation of the historical reliability of the New Testament documents.

On Guard, p.183

Criteria of authenticity

The criteria are really signs of historical credibility. The presence of one of these signs increases the probability that the recorded incident is historical.

Historical fit: The incident fits in with known historical facts of the time and place (contextual credibility)

Independent, early sources: The incident is related in multiple sources, which are near to the time when the incident is said to have occurred in which don't rely on each other or on a common source.

Embarrassment: The incident is awkward or counterproductive for the early Christian Church.

Dissimilarity: The incident is unlike earlier Jewish ideas and/or unlike later Christian ideas.

Semitisms: Traces of Hebrew and Aramaic language (spoken by Jesus' countrymen) appear in the story.

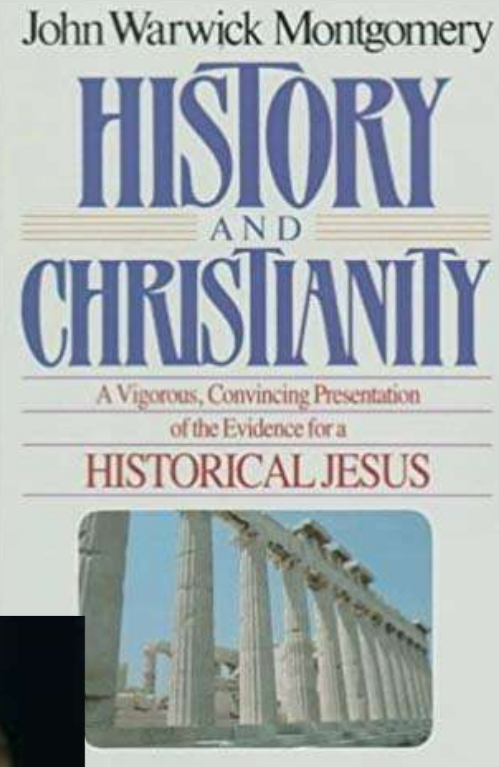
Coherence: The incident fits in with facts already established about Jesus.


As cited in John Warwick Montgomery's
History & Christianity, 1976

Chauncey Sanders, *Introduction to Research in English Literary History*, 1952, pp. 143 ff. (professor of military history)


Tests of reliability employed in general historiographical and literary criticism as;

bibliographical,
internal and
external.





Bibliographical refers to the analysis of the textual tradition by which a document reaches us. In the case of the NT documents, the question is: Not having the original copies (autographs), can we reconstruct them well enough to see what they say Jesus claimed?



Internal evidence means that we must listen to the claims of the document under analysis, and not assume fraud or error, *a priori*, unless the author disqualifies himself by contradictions or known factual inaccuracies. We ought to follow Aristotle's dictum that the benefit of the doubt is to be given to the document itself, not arrogated by the critic to himself.

External evidence involves asking the question: Do other independent historical materials confirm or deny the internal testimony provided by the documents themselves?

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

The Reliability of the NT Account

- ▶ Roman historian, Colin J. Hemer, notes 17 reasons (very detailed knowledge of Roman culture, etc.) for accepting the traditional early date (A.D. 62) of Acts during the lifetime of the contemporaries of the events. Thus, also, Gospel of Luke, Acts 1:1 (A.D. 60-61). *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History* by Colin J. Hemer
- ▶ Contributing to the idea that the Gospel of Luke is indeed historical and not mythological, Luke manifests an incredible array of knowledge of local places, names, conditions, customs, and circumstances that befit only an eyewitness contemporary to the time and events. All of these have been confirmed by historical and archaeological research to be true of the persons, times, customs, and places mentioned by Luke. (unlike the BoM)
- ▶ 82 specific points mentioned by Hemer (cf. *12 Points...*, Geisler, pp. 85-88).

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

► The Reliability of the NT Account (cont.)

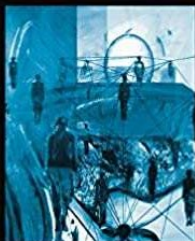
Roman historian, Colin J. Hemer, notes 17 reasons for accepting the traditional early date (A.D. 62) of Acts during the lifetime of the contemporaries of the events, strongly supporting the historicity of Acts and, indirectly, the Gospel of Luke, Acts 1:1 (A.D. 60-61).

The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenistic History by Colin J. Hemer

The first 5 of Hemer's points are sufficient to show Acts as written by A.D. 62:

- (1) no mention of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70;
- (2) no hint of the outbreak of the Jewish War in 66;
- (3) no hint of the Neronian persecution of the late 60s;
- (4) Acts 28 has Paul still alive, thus written before his death in A.D. 65;
- (5) no hint of the death of James by the Sanhedrin in ~62 as recorded by Josephus.

The
BOOK OF ACTS



in the Setting of
HELLENISTIC HISTORY

Colin J. Hemer

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

▶ The Historicity of the Gospel Accounts

▶ The Author of Luke is Known to be an Accurate Historian

- ▶ (1) Author of “Luke” was highly educated based on sophistication he wrote in Greek (cf. Lk. 1:1-4)
- ▶ (2) was not one of the 12 disciples (Lk. 1:2)
- ▶ (3) was a participant himself (Lk. 1:3)
- ▶ (4) was very knowledgeable about Paul
- ▶ (5) knew and quoted the OT in Greek (LXX)
- ▶ (6) had a good knowledge of the political and social situation in the first century
- ▶ (7) was a traveler with Paul at times as indicated by the “we” sections (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16)
- ▶ (8) was not the people listed in Acts 20:4
- ▶ (9) had a knowledge of medicine, as indicated by his use of medical terms
- ▶ “Luke the beloved physician” (Col. 4:14). Paul’s only companion who fits these characteristics.

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- ▶ The Historicity of the Gospel Accounts
 - ▶ The Gospel of Luke Was Written by about A.D. 60-61 by Luke, the Doctor
 - ▶ The author of Acts refers to his “former account” about Jesus (1:1)
 - ▶ Same excellent Greek and use of medical terminology
 - ▶ An unbroken & virtually unchallenged tradition of Luke as author
 - ▶ Luke states his historical interest in 1:1-4 claiming
 - ▶ (1) he is aware of other written accounts
 - ▶ (2) his Gospel is based upon “eye-witness” testimony
 - ▶ (3) he has “carefully investigated everything from the beginning”
 - ▶ Roman historian Colin Hemer has provided strong arguments for Acts being written by A.D. 62, and since Luke was written before Acts, it follows that Luke is from ~A.D. 60-61. That’s only 27 years after Christ and the generation of His eye-witnesses could check Luke’s writings.

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- ▶ The Historicity of the Gospel Accounts
 - ▶ The Gospel of Luke Was Written by about A.D. 60-61 by Luke, the Doctor
 - ▶ Luke correlates the life of Christ with secular history (1:5)
 - ▶ Jesus' birth (2:1-2) "...a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken...This was the first census taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria."
 - ▶ Jesus began His ministry (3:1-2) "Now in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip was tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias was tetrarch of Abilene, in the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,..."
 - ▶ Myths are not written like this! Historical fictions were not a style of writing at this time in history.

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- ▶ The Historicity of the Gospel Accounts
 - ▶ William F. Albright on the Historicity of the Gospels
 - ▶ The Dean of 20th century archaeologists wrote, “In short, thanks to the Qumran discoveries, the New Testament proves to be in fact what it was formerly believed to be: the teaching of Christ and His immediate followers between cir. 25 and cir. 80 A.D.”
 - ▶ *From Stone Age to Christianity*, p. 23.
 - ▶ Albright affirmed, “I should answer that, in my opinion, every book of the New Testament was written by a baptized Jew between the forties and the eighties of the first century A.D. (very probably sometime between about 50 and 75 A.D.)” -- *Christianity Today*, 1.18.63
 - ▶ “The evidence from the Qumran community shows that the concepts, terminology, and mindset of the Gospel of John is probably early 1st century.” Geisler, p. 92

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- ▶ The Historicity of the Gospel Accounts
 - ▶ The Confirmation by a Liberal Critic of the New Testament
 - ▶ Bishop John Robinson was a NT scholar who helped in the spawning of the “Death of God” movement in later 20th century. Before he died and without recanting his negative views, Robinson wrote a revealing book titled *Redating the New Testament* in which he places:
 - ▶ Matthew at c. A.D. 40 - 60+
 - ▶ Mark at c. A.D. 45 – 60
 - ▶ Luke at c. 57 – 60+
 - ▶ John at c. 40 – 65+

This would mean that some Gospels could be as early as 7 years after the death of Christ! And by the outer limits they were all composed within the limits of the eyewitnesses and contemporaries of the events. This is much too early to deny their basic historicity.

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- ▶ The Gospels Are Too Early to be Mythology
 - ▶ Julius Muller (1801-78) challenged the scholars of his day to produce even one example where in one generation a myth developed. (*The Theory of Myths in its Application to Gospel History, Examined and Confuted*, p.29)
 - ▶ A.N. Sherwin-White observed: “Herodotus enables us to test the tempo of myth-making, and the tests suggest that even two generations are too short a span to allow the mythical tendency to prevail over the hard historic core of oral tradition.”
(*Roman Society and Roman Law in the NT*, p. 190)

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- Confirmation of the NT by Early “Creeds” or Traditions
 - Probable examples based on rhythm and repetitive patterns:
- I Tim. 3:16 “And by common confession great is the mystery of godliness:

He who was revealed in the flesh,
Was vindicated in the Spirit,
Beheld by angels,
Proclaimed among the nations,
Believed on in the world,
Taken up in glory.”

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

► Confirmation of the NT by Early “Creeds” or Traditions

► Probable examples based on rhythm and repetitive patterns:

► I Cor. 15:3-8

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also *received*,
that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and
that He was buried, and
that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and
that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After
that He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time,
most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep;
then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one
untimely born, He appeared to me also.”

“Concerning a more exact date, it is very popular to date this creed in the mid A.D. 30s. More specifically, numerous critical theologians date it from 3 to 8 years after Jesus’ resurrection.”

The Historical Jesus by Gary R. Habermas, 1996, p. 154

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

► Confirmation for the NT from the Basic Facts Position

- “There are a minimum number of facts agreed upon by practically all critical scholars, whatever their school of thought. At least 12 separate facts are considered to be knowable history.
- ⁽¹⁾Jesus died by crucifixion and ⁽²⁾ was buried. ⁽³⁾Jesus’ death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope, believing that His life was ended. ⁽⁴⁾Although not as widely accepted, many scholars hold that the tomb in which Jesus was buried was discovered to be empty just a few days later.
- Critical scholars further agree that ⁽⁵⁾the disciples had experiences which they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus. Because of these experiences, ⁽⁶⁾the disciples were transformed from doubters who were afraid to identify themselves with Jesus to bold proclaimers of His death and resurrection. ⁽⁷⁾This message was the center of preaching in the early church and ⁽⁸⁾was especially proclaimed in Jerusalem, where Jesus died and was buried shortly before.
- As a result of this preaching, ⁽⁹⁾the church was born and grew, ⁽¹⁰⁾with Sunday as the primary day of worship. ⁽¹¹⁾James, who had been a skeptic, was converted to the faith when he also believed that he saw the resurrected Jesus. ⁽¹²⁾A few years later, Paul was converted by an experience which he, likewise, believed to be an appearance of the risen Jesus.”
Habermas, p. 158

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- The Internal Evidence for the Historicity of the Gospels [thus not myth]
 - Gospel Writers Made No Attempt to Harmonize their Accounts
 - One angel at the tomb or two (Mt. 28:2-3 v John 20:12)
 - Judas hanged himself or fell and bowels burst out (Mt. 27:5 v Acts 1:18)
 - Jesus healed 2 blind men or 1 blind man (Mt. 9:27 v Luke 18:35f)
 - The inscription on the cross reads 4 different ways in the 4 Gospels
 - (Mt. 27:37 v Mark 15:26 v Luke 23:38 v John 19:19)

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- The Internal Evidence for the Historicity of the Gospels [thus not myth]
 - Gospel Writers Included Passages that Placed Jesus in a Bad Light (the criteria of embarrassment)
 - Jesus was called: “a winebibber” (Mt. 11:19)
 - “a mad man” (John 10:20)
 - “demon possessed” (John 8:48)
 - “Jesus’ brothers did not believe in Him” (John 7:5)

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- ▶ **The Internal Evidence for the Historicity of the Gospels [thus not myth]**
 - ▶ **Gospel Writers Left Difficult Passages in their Text**
 - ▶ “the Father is greater than I” (John 14:28)
 - ▶ “no one knows the time...” (Matt. 24:36)
 - ▶ **Gospel Writers Recorded Self-Incriminating Stories**
 - ▶ Peter denied Jesus 3 times (Lk 22:34)
 - ▶ Peter cuts off ear of high priest’s servant (Mark 14:47)
 - ▶ **Gospel Writers Carefully Distinguished Jesus’ Words from their Own**
 - ▶ Red letter editions are obvious! Paul said “not I, but the Lord” (I Cor. 7:10)
 - ▶ **Gospel Writers Did Not Deny Their Testimony Under Persecution or Threat of Death**
 - ▶ People don’t willingly die for what they know is a lie.

The New Testament Documents are Historically Reliable

- ▶ The Internal Evidence for the Historicity of the Gospels [thus not myth]
 - ▶ NT Events Based in Eye-Witness Testimony
 - ▶ John 19:35; 21:24; Luke 1:1-4; Acts 2:32; 4:19-20; 10:39-41; I Cor. 15:3-8; Hebrews 2:-4; I Peter 5:1; II Peter 1:16; I John 1:1
 - ▶ John 19:35 “And he who has seen [the crucifixion] has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.”
 - ▶ John 21:24 “This is the disciple who bears witness of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his witness is true.”

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 - ▶ Luke 1:1-4 “Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word have handed them down to us, it seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order, most excellent Theophilus; so that you might know the exact truth about the things you have been taught.”

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 - ▶ Acts 2:32 “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.”
 - ▶ Acts 4:19-20 “But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen and heard.”
 - ▶ Acts 10:39-41 “And we are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. And they also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. “God raised Him up on the third day, and granted that He should become visible, not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us, who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.”

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- ▶ I Cor. 15:3-8 “For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than 500 brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; and last of all, as it were to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.” [written A.D. 55-56]

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- ▶ Hebrews 2:-4 “...how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will.”

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- ▶ I Peter 5:1 “Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ,...”
- ▶ II Peter 1:16 “For we did not follow cleverly devised tales [myths, μυθοις] when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.”
- ▶ I John1:1 “What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life...”