Introduction

God in His great grace has revealed truth to us. Scripture is objectively true in all that it affirms. Our faith is not a "blind leap" as many say and believe. The objective evidences of Scripture's authenticity and reliability are:

1. The Textual Evidence

There is a common cultural belief that throughout the years, translation errors have accumulated to such an extent that what we have now for our translations of Scripture have little resemblance to the "Original Autographs."

The Original Autographs are what were inspired by God. None of them are available today. Is that a problem for the truthfulness of our current translations of Scripture?

The accuracy of a modern text to its original autograph is evaluated for all writings based on several key tests of the text. Two of these principle tests are:

- **A.** The time gap between the original autograph and the earliest available manuscript.
- **B.** The number of early manuscripts that reflect a high degree of consistency in textual content.
- **A.** How does Scripture compare to other ancient documents that are routinely used by scholars to establish historical narratives as fact regarding the time gap between the original autographs and the earliest available manuscript?

Author	Date	Earliest	Time	Number
	Written	Сору	Gap	of Copies
Caesar, Roman emperor	1 st Century BC	900 AD	1000 yr	10
Livy, Roman historian	1 st Century BC	4th Century	400 yr	20
Tacitus, Roman historian	$\approx 100 \text{ AD}$	1100 AD	1000 yr	20
Thucydides, Greek historian	5 th Century BC	900 AD	1400 yr	8
Herodotus, Greek historian	5 th Century BC	900 AD	1400 yr	8
Demosthenes, Athenian	4 th Century BC	1100 AD	1500 yr	200
orator/statesman				
Homer, Greek poet	9 th Century BC	None	Unknown	643
New Testament	50 - 100 AD	130 - 150 AD	30 to <100 yr	> 5,600 Greek
				>10,000 Latin
Quotations from the Church	95 – 450 AD	150 AD	50 - 350 yr	>1,000,000
Fathers				

Dating of the original sources of NT manuscripts:

- Most NT autographs date to within 20 to 32 years of Jesus death and resurrection.
- The exceptions are the writings of John which occurred between 50 to 60 years after the resurrection of Jesus. (Remember that John was charged with caring for Mary, the mother of Jesus from the cross. See John 19:25-27)
- **B.** Textual variants are the differences between various texts of New Testament manuscripts. Critics will say that these ancient texts are filled with close to a million textual variants, so how could we possibly know what the "original autographs" actually said?

Let's consider a possible textual variant in Ephesians 1:7 which reads "<u>In him</u> we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace." (ESV)

Let's think about this graphically. Suppose that we have 48 manuscripts of this section of the New Testament. In this verse alone, we find 5 textual variants. This is a big problem! In these 48 manuscripts, we see:

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In him; In him
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Most textual variants are similar to these examples:

- The variants do not change the intent of the passage.
- The evidence is overwhelming that the "original autograph" almost certainly was written with "In him" as the correct text.
- Since the original Greek manuscripts were written in all capitals, it is reasonable to suggest that the term "In him" could have been misinterpreted and therefore the copyist of these four manuscripts wanted to clarify who was being written about and changed it for clarity.

2. The Historical Evidence

Writings by historians during and immediately after a period of history in question serve as evidence regarding the accuracy of our knowledge of the period in question. There are a number of historical accounts that address Jesus ministry and the 1st century growth of the Church that are rarely mentioned by Bible critics and our cultural spokesmen in discussing the 1st century of the Church.

Confirmation of NT facts with ancient secular (non-Christian) historical sources:

- Jewish historian Josephus (37-100 AD): Jesus lived and ministered; he was crucified, and some say he was resurrected.
- Roman historian Tacitus (55-116 AD): Torture and crucifixion of Christ and his followers.
- Greek Satirist Lucian (170 AD): Crucifixion of Christ and his followers.
- Roman historian Suetonius (≈ 120 AD): Expulsion of Christians from Rome in 49 AD (Acts 18:2)
- Pliny the Younger (62 -112 AD) Execution of Christians in Bithynia in 112 AD
- Samaritan historian Thallus (\approx 52 AD): Darkness fell over the land when Christ was crucified.
- Phlegon of Tralles (2nd century AD): Darkness over the land when Christ was crucified.
- Letter of Mara Bar-Serapion (73 AD): Compares Jesus to Socrates and Pythagoras.
- Jewish Talmud commentary (70 200 AD): Yeshu was hanged on eve of Passover.

Many essential facts of Jesus life and the early church are recorded in unbiased writings of these historical authors.

3. The Archeological Evidence

There are many archeological documents of apparently low importance that actually contribute substantially to the authentication of the Scriptures. These are business, legal, and personal documents that mention facts mentioned in Scripture.

- **Business documents** such as 1) business contracts; 2) shipping manifests; 3) sales and tax records; 4) loans and debts; etc.
- **Legal documents** such as 1) court records of evidence and judgments; 2) naming of witnesses and defendants; 3) wills and inheritance records; 4) property deeds and transfers; etc.
- **Personal documents** such as 1) letters; 2) diaries; 3) personal records and notes; 4) genealogies; etc.

These records all name and give detailed information about people, places, events, and culture that are used by Archeologists to verify the claims of Scripture.

4. The Scientific Evidence

Our understanding of Scripture has been greatly enhanced by discoveries about the universe that have only been known since the 20th century.

- **Time had a beginning**. In the 20th century scientists discovered that the universe had a beginning, and in that beginning, time (as we know it) began. Before that beginning, the time that we know and experience did not exist. The Scriptures speak of the concept of "before time began." (1 Cor 2:7; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 1:2)
- The universe had an origin. Almost all ancient myths teach an eternally existent universe in which the world was formed from its substance. Only Scripture speaks of a universe (kosmos) which was spoken into existence out of nothing (ex-nihilo).
- The heavens expand. Scientists discovered the "expansionary universe" in the early 20th century that tells us that the universe is expanding (being stretched out). This is different than a universe in which stars and galaxies are rushing away from each other. Scripture uses "Stretches out the heavens" a number of times to describe God's work in creation. See Job 9:6-9; Isaiah 40:21-22; Isaiah 42:5; Isaiah 44:24; Isaiah 45:11-12; Isaiah 48:12-13; Jeremiah 10:12; Jeremiah 51:15; and Zechariah 12:1. (Apparently not referring to universe: Job 37:18 and Ps 104:2.)
- **The universe is finely tuned.** Scientists have discovered that the universe is extremely "fine tuned" such that the appearance of design is overwhelming.

Fred Hoyle, an atheist scientist, said "...a superintellect has monkeyed with physics, as well as with chemistry and biology."

Astrophysicist Robert Jastrow wrote "For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries."

The balance of four fundamental forces of the universe are fine tuned to make a universe that can support advanced life (greater than one celled life); gravity, electromagnetism, strong nuclear force, and the weak nuclear force.

Secular scientists have hypothesized a huge number of universes (infinite #) in order to justify the statistical impossibility of this universe being astronomically fine tuned for life.

- - Since there are only 10^{22} stars (ten million quadrillion stars) in the universe, the likelihood of a single earth like planet (earth itself) existing in the universe would be $10^{-41}/10^{-22} = 10^{-18}$. That means that the likelihood of the earth coming into being by natural processes is 1:1,000,000,000,000,000,000 or one chance in a billion billion.
- **Biology evidences creation.** The evidence against life forming by natural processes without intelligent design demonstrates that it is impossible. If all the matter in the universe were converted into the building blocks of life, and if assembly of these building blocks were attempted once per micro-second

for the entire age of the universe, then the likelihood of life being formed by natural processes would be 1 in $10^{100,000,000,000}$ which means there is no chance at all.

There are currently no scientifically viable theories regarding the origin of life in the scientific community.

5. The Transformative Evidence

Throughout the history of the Church there is overwhelming anecdotal evidence that men's lives are transformed by the Christ of Scriptures in ways that are beyond normal or reasonable psychological explanations. The biographies of Christian believers throughout history provide a powerful apologetic These transformations are beyond human ability to explain.

Conclusion

Our faith is a testable objective faith. God does not require "blind faith," but has given us objective evidence for our faith.

Related Quotes

"...the laws of physics...seem themselves to be the product of exceedingly ingenious design. There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all. It seems as though somebody has fine tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe. The impression of design is overwhelming."

Paul Davies, Atheist/Agnostic Astronomer

"The medieval theologian who gazed at the night sky through the eyes of Aristotle and saw angels moving the spheres in harmony has become the modern cosmologist who gazes at the same sky through the eyes of Einstein and sees the hand of God not in angels but in the constants of nature. - - When confronted with the order and beauty of the universe and the strange coincidences of nature, it's very tempting to take the leap of faith from science into religion. I am sure many physicists want to. I only wish they would admit it."

Tony Rothman, Theoretical Physicist

"If we need an atheist for a debate, I go to the philosophy department. The physics department isn't much use."

Robert Griffiths, Mathematical Physicist