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THE HISTORICAL CHRIST—FACT OR FICTION?

Kyle Butt, M.A.

Most children and adults easily recognize the name of Jesus Christ. Many even can recount the story of His life. Also easily recognizable are the names of Peter Pan and Rumpelstiltskin. And most people can relate the “facts” of these fairy tales as well. Is Jesus of Nazareth a fictional character who deserves to be included in a list containing mystifying magicians, daring dragon slayers, and flying boy heroes? The world-famous medical doctor and lifelong critic of Christianity, Albert Schweitzer, answered with a resounding “yes” when he wrote:

The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah, who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb (1964, p. 398).

In more modern times, former-preacher-turned-atheist Dan Barker has suggested that “the New Testament Jesus is a myth” (1992, p. 378). Are such views based upon historical evidence and therefore worthy of serious consideration? Or do they represent merely wishful thinking on the part of those who prefer to believe—for whatever reason—that Christ never lived? Was Jesus Christ a man whose feet got dirty and whose body grew tired just like the rest of humanity? Fortunately, such questions can

be answered by an honest appeal to the available historical evidence.

What is a “historical” person? Martin Kahler suggested: “Is it not the person who originates and bequeaths a permanent influence? He is one of those dynamic individuals who intervene in the course of events” (1896, p. 63). Do any records exist to document the claim that Jesus Christ “intervened in the course of events” known as world history? Indeed they do.

HOSTILE TESTIMONY

Interestingly, the first type of records comes from what are known commonly as “hostile” sources—writers who mentioned Jesus in a negative light or derogatory fashion. Such penmen certainly were not predisposed to further the cause of Christ or otherwise to add credence to His existence. In fact, quite the opposite is true. They rejected His teachings and often reviled Him as well. Thus, one can appeal to them without the charge of built-in bias.

In his book, *The Historical Figure of Jesus*, E.P. Sanders stated: “Most of the first-century literature that survives was written by members of the very small elite class of the Roman Empire. To them, Jesus (if they heard of him at all) was merely a troublesome rabble-rouser and magician in a small, backward part of the world” (1993, p. 49, parenthetical comment in orig.). It is now to this “small elite class of the Roman Empire” that we turn our attention for documentation of Christ’s existence.

Tacitus (c. A.D. 56-117) should be among the first of several hostile witnesses called to the stand. He was a member of the Roman provincial upper class with a formal education who held several high positions under different emperors such as Nerva and Trajan (see Tacitus, 1952, p. 7). His famous work, *Annals*, was a history of Rome written in approximately A.D. 115. In the *Annals* he told of the Great Fire of Rome, which occurred in A.D. 64. Nero, the Roman emperor in office at the time, was suspected by many of having ordered the city set on fire. Tacitus wrote:

Nero fabricated scapegoats—and punished with every refinement the notoriously depraved Christians (as they were popularly called). Their originator, Christ, had been executed in Tiberius’ reign by the governor of Judea, Pontius Pilatus. But in spite of this temporary setback the deadly superstition had broken out afresh, not only in Judea (where the mischief had started) but even in Rome (1952, 15.44, parenthetical comments in orig.).

Tacitus hated both Christians and their namesake, Christ. He therefore had nothing positive to say about what he referred to as a “deadly superstition.” He did, however, **have something to say about it.** His testimony establishes beyond any reasonable doubt that the Christian religion not only was relevant historically, but that Christ, as its originator, was a verifiable historical figure of such prominence that He

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even attracted the attention of the Roman emperor himself!

Additional hostile testimony originated from Suetonius, who wrote around A.D. 120. Robert Graves, as translator of Suetonius' work, *The Twelve Caesars*, declared:

Suetonius was fortunate in having ready access to the Imperial and Senatorial archives and to a great body of contemporary memoirs and public documents, and in having himself lived nearly thirty years under the Caesars. Much of his information about Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero comes from eye-witnesses of the events described (Suetonius, 1957, p. 7).

The testimony of Suetonius is a reliable piece of historical evidence. Twice in his history, Suetonius specifically mentioned Christ or His followers. He wrote, for example: "Because the Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbance at the instigation of Chrestus, he [Claudius—KB] expelled them from the city" (*Claudius*, 25:4; note that in Acts 18:2 Luke mentioned this expulsion by Claudius). Sanders noted that *Chrestus* is a misspelling of *Christos*, "the Greek word that translates the Hebrew 'Messiah'" (1993, pp. 49-50). Suetonius further commented: "Punishments were also inflicted on the Christians, a sect professing a new and mischievous religious belief" (*Nero*, 16:2). Again, it is evident that Suetonius and the Roman government had feelings of hatred toward Christ and His alleged mischievous band of rebels. It is equally evident that Suetonius (and, in fact, most of Rome) recognized that Christ was the noteworthy founder of a historically significant new religion.

Along with Tacitus and Seutonius, Pliny the Younger must be allowed to take a seat among hostile Roman witnesses. In approximately A.D. 110-111, Pliny was sent by the Roman emperor Trajan to govern the affairs of the region of Bithynia. From this region, Pliny corresponded with the emperor concerning a problem he viewed as quite serious. He wrote: "I was never present at any trial of Christians; therefore I do not know the customary penalties or investigations and what limits are observed" (as quoted in Wilken, 1990, p. 4). He then went on to state:

This is the course that I have adopted in the case of those brought before me as Christians. I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it, I repeat the question a second and a third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist, I sentence them to death (as quoted in Wilken, p. 4).

Pliny used the term "Christian" or "Christians" seven times in his letter, thereby corroborating it as a generally accepted term that was recognized by both the Roman Empire and its emperor. Pliny also used the name "Christ" three times to refer to the originator of the "sect." It is undeniably the case that Christians, with Christ as their founder, had multiplied in such a way as to draw the attention of the emperor and his magistrates by the time of Pliny's letter to Trajan. In light of this evidence, it is impossible to deny the fact that Jesus Christ existed and was recognized by the highest officials within the Roman government as an actual, historical person.

Celsus, a second-century pagan philosopher, produced a vehement attack upon Christianity by the title of *True Discourse* (c. A.D. 178). In that vile document, Celsus argued that Christ owed his existence to the result of fornication between Mary and a Roman soldier named Panthera. As he matured, Jesus began to call himself God—an action, said Celsus, which caused his Jewish brethren to kill him. Yet as denigrating as his attack was, Celsus never went so far as to suggest that Christ did not exist.

Some have attempted to negate the testimony of these hostile Roman witnesses to Christ's historicity by suggesting that the "Roman sources that mention him are all dependent on Christian reports" (Sanders, 1993, p. 49). For example, in his book, *The Earliest Records of Jesus*, Francis Beare lamented:

Everything that has been recorded of the Jesus of history was recorded for us by men to whom he was Christ the Lord; and we cannot expunge their faith from the records without making the records themselves virtually worthless. There is no Jesus known to history except him who is depicted by his followers as the Christ, the Son of God, the Saviour to the World (1962, p. 19).



Such a suggestion is as outlandish as it is outrageous. Not only is there no evidence to support such a claim, but all of the available evidence militates against it. Furthermore, it is an untenable position to suggest that such upper class Roman historians would submit for inclusion in the official annals of Roman history (to be preserved for posterity) facts that were related to them by a notorious tribe of “mischievous,” “depraved,” “superstitious” misfits.

Even a casual reader who glances over the testimony of the hostile Roman witnesses who bore testimony to the historicity of Christ will be struck by the fact that these ancient men depicted Christ as neither the Son of God nor the Savior of the world. They verbally stripped Him of His Sonship, denied His glory, and belittled His magnificence. They described Him to their contemporaries, and for posterity, as a mere man. Yet even though they were wide of the mark in regard to the truth of **Who** He was, through their caustic diatribes they nevertheless documented **that** He was. And for that we are indebted to them.

TESTIMONY OF JESUS AMONG THE JEWS

Even though much of the hostile testimony regarding the existence of Jesus originated from witnesses within the Roman Empire, such testimony is not the only kind of hostile historical evidence available. Anyone familiar with Jewish history will recognize immediately the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*. The *Mishnah* was a book of Jewish law traditions codified by Rabbi Judah around the year A.D. 200 and known to the Jews as the “whole code of religious jurisprudence” (Bruce, 1953, p. 101). Jewish rabbis studied the *Mishnah* and even wrote a body of commentary based upon it known as the *Gemares*. The *Mishnah* and *Gemares* are known collectively as the *Talmud* (Bruce, 1953, p. 101). The complete *Talmud* surfaced around A.D. 300. If a person as influential as Jesus had existed in the land of Palestine during the first century, surely the rabbis would have had **something** to say about him. Undoubtedly, a man who supposedly confronted the most astute religious leaders of His day—and won—would be named among the opinions of those who shared His rabbinical title. As Bruce declared:

According to the earlier Rabbis whose opinions are recorded in these writings, Jesus of Nazareth was a transgressor in Israel, who practised magic, scorned the words of the wise, led the people astray, and said that he had not come to destroy the law but to add to it. He was hanged on Passover Eve for heresy and misleading the people. His disciples, of whom five are named, healed the sick in his name (1953, p. 102).

First-century Judaism, in large part, refused to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of the God. Yet it did not refuse to accept Him as a historical man from a literal city known as Nazareth or to record for posterity crucial facts about His life and death.

Josephus is another important Jewish witness. The son of Mattathias, he was born into a Jewish upper class priestly family around A.D. 37. His education in biblical law and history stood among the best of his day (Sanders, 1993, p. 15). At age nineteen, he became a Pharisee. When Jerusalem rebelled against the Roman authorities, he was given command of the Jewish forces in Galilee. After losing most of his men, he surrendered to the Romans. He found favor in the man who commanded the Roman army, Vespasian, by predicting that Vespasian soon would be elevated to the position of emperor. Josephus’ prediction came true in A.D. 69 at Vespasian’s inauguration. After the fall of Jerusalem, Josephus assumed the family name of the emperor (Flavius) and settled down to live a life as a government pensioner. It was during these latter years that he wrote *Antiquities of the Jews* between September 93 and September 94 (Bruce, 1953, pp. 103-104). Josephus himself gave the date as the thirteenth year of Domitian (Rajak, 1984, p. 237). His contemporaries viewed his career indignantly as one of traitorous rebellion to the Jewish nation (Bruce, 1953, p. 104).

Twice in *Antiquities*, Jesus’ name flowed from Josephus’ pen. *Antiquities* 18:3:3 reads as follows:

And there arose about this time Jesus, a wise man, *if indeed we should call him a man*; for he was a doer of marvelous deeds, a teacher of men who receive the truth with pleasure. He led away many Jews, and also Greeks. *This man was the Christ*. And when Pilate had condemned him to the cross

on his impeachment by the chief men among us, those who had loved him at first did not cease; *for he appeared to them on the third day alive again, the divine prophets having spoken these and thousands of other wonderful things about him*: and even now the tribe of Christians, so named after him, has not yet died out.

Certain historians regard the italicized segments of the section as “Christian interpolation.” There is, however, no evidence from textual criticism that would warrant such an opinion (Bruce, 1953, p. 110). In fact, every extant Greek manuscript contains the disputed portions. The passage also exists in both Hebrew and Arabic versions. And although the Arabic version is slightly different, it still exhibits knowledge of the disputed sections (see Chapman, 1981, p. 29; Habermas, 1996, pp. 193-196).

There are several reasons generally offered for rejecting the passage as genuine. First, early Christian writers like Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Origen did not use Josephus’ statement in their defense of Christ’s deity. Habermas observed that Origen, in fact, documented the fact that Josephus (although himself a Jew) did not believe Christ to be the Messiah (1996, p. 192; cf. Origen’s *Contra Celsum*, 1:47). However, as Habermas also pointed out, the fourth-century writer Eusebius, in his *Ecclesiastical History* (1:11), quoted Josephus’ statement about Christ, including the disputed words. And he undoubtedly had access to much more ancient sources than those now available.

Furthermore, it should not be all that surprising that such early Christian apologists did not appeal to Josephus in their writings. Wayne Jackson has suggested:

Josephus’ writings may not have been in extensive circulation at that point in time. His *Antiquities* was not completed until about 93 A.D. Too, in view of the fact that Josephus was not respected by the Jews, his works may not have been valued as an apologetic tool (1991, 11:29).

Such a suggestion possesses merit. Professor Bruce Metzger commented: “Because Josephus was deemed a renegade to Judaism, Jewish scribes were not interested in preserving his writings for posterity” (1965, p. 75). Thomas H. Horne, in his *Critical Introduction to the Study and Knowledge of the*

Holy Scriptures, referred to the fact that the main source of evidence frequently used by the so-called “church fathers” was an appeal to the Old Testament rather than to human sources (1841, 1:463-464). The evidence substantiates Horne’s conclusion. For example, a survey of the index to the eight volumes of the multi-volume set, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, reveals only eleven references to Josephus in the entire set.

The second reason sometimes offered as to why the disputed passage in Josephus’ *Antiquities* might be due to “Christian interpolation” is the fact that it seems unlikely that a non-Christian writer would include such statements as “this man was the Christ” or “if indeed we should call him a man.” But while such might be unlikely, it certainly is not beyond the realm of possibility. Any number of reasons could explain why Josephus would write what he did. For example, Bruce allowed for the possibility that Josephus might have been speaking sarcastically (1953, p. 110). Howard Key suggested:

If we assume that in making explicit statements about Jesus as Messiah and about the resurrection Josephus is merely conveying what Jesus’ followers claimed on his behalf, then there would be no reason to deny that he wrote them [i.e., the supposed interpolated phrases—KB] (1970, p. 33).

It also should be noted that Josephus hardly qualifies as the sole author of such statements made about Christ by those who rejected His deity. Ernest Renan, for example, was a nineteenth-century French historian whose book, *The Life of Jesus*, was a frontal assault on Christ’s deity that received major attention throughout Europe (see Thompson, 1994, 14:5). Yet in that very volume Renan wrote: “It is allowable to call Divine this sublime person who, each day, still presides over the destinies of the world” (as quoted in Schaff & Roussel, 1868, pp. 116-117).

Or consider H.G. Wells who, in 1931, authored *The Outline of History*. On page 270 of that famous work, Wells referred to Jesus as “a prophet of unprecedented power.” No one who knew Wells (a man who certainly did not believe in the divinity of Christ) ever would accuse his account of being flawed by “Christian interpolation.” The famous humanist, Will Durant, was

an avowed atheist, yet he wrote: “The greatest question of our time is not communism vs. individualism, not Europe vs. America, not even the East vs. the West; it is whether men can bear to live without God” (1932, p. 23). Comments like those of Renan, Wells, and Durant document the fact that, on occasion, even unbelievers have written convincingly about God and Christ.

Furthermore, even if the material containing the alleged Christian interpolation is removed, the vocabulary and grammar of the section “cohere well with Josephus’ style and language” (Meier, 1990, p. 90). In fact, almost every word (omitting for the moment the supposed interpolations) is found elsewhere in Josephus (Meier, p. 90). Were the disputed material to be expunged, the testimony of Josephus still would verify the fact that Jesus Christ actually lived. Habermas therefore concluded:

There are good indications that the majority of the text is genuine. There is no textual evidence against it, and, conversely, there is very good manuscript evidence for this statement about Jesus, thus making it difficult to ignore. Additionally, leading scholars on the works of Josephus [Daniel-Rops, 1962, p. 21; Bruce, 1967, p. 108; Anderson, 1969, p. 20] have testified that this portion is written in the style of this Jewish historian (1996, p. 193).

In addition, Josephus did not remain mute regarding Christ in his later sections. *Antiquities* 20:9:1 relates that Ananus brought before the Sanhedrin “a man named James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ, and certain others. He accused them of having transgressed the law, and condemned them to be stoned to death.” Bruce observed that this quote from Josephus “is chiefly important because he calls James ‘the brother of Jesus the so-called Christ,’ in such a way as to suggest that he has already made reference to Jesus. And we do find reference to him in all extant copies of Josephus” (Bruce, 1953, p. 109). Meier, in an article titled “Jesus in Josephus,” made it clear that rejecting this passage as actually having been written by Josephus defies accurate assessment of the text (1990, pp. 79-81). Meier also added another emphatic defense of the historical reliability of the text in *Antiquities* concerning Christ.

Practically no one is astounded or refuses to believe that in the same book 18 of *The Jewish Antiquities* Josephus also chose to write a longer sketch of another marginal Jew, another peculiar religious leader in Palestine, “John surnamed the Baptist” (*Ant.* 18.5.2). Fortunately for us, Josephus had more than a passing interest in marginal Jews (p. 99).

Regardless of what one believes about the writings of Josephus, the simple fact is that this well-educated, Jewish historian wrote about a man named Jesus Who actually existed in the first century. Yamauchi summarized quite well the findings of the secular sources regarding Christ:

Even if we did not have the New Testament or Christian writings, we would be able to conclude from such non-Christian writings as Josephus, the *Talmud*, Tacitus and Pliny the Younger that: (1) Jesus was a Jewish teacher; (2) many people believed that he performed healings and exorcisms; (3) he was rejected by the Jewish leaders; (4) he was crucified under Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius; (5) despite this shameful death, his followers, who believed that he was still alive, spread beyond Palestine so that there were multitudes of them in Rome by 64 A.D.; (6) all kinds of people from the cities and countryside—men and women, slave and free—worshipped him as God by the beginning of the second century (1995, p. 222).

RELIABILITY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT RECORDS

Although the above list of hostile and Jewish witnesses proves beyond the shadow of a doubt that Jesus actually lived, it is by no means the only historical evidence available to those interested in this topic. The gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), and the other 23 books that form the New Testament, provide more information about Jesus than any other source(s) available. But may these records be viewed as historical evidence, or are they instead writings whose reliability pales in comparison to other types of historical documentation? Blomberg has explained why the historical question of the Gospels, for example, must be considered.

Many who have never studied the gospels in a scholarly context believe

that biblical criticism has virtually disproved the existence [of Christ—KB]. An examination of the gospel’s historical reliability must therefore precede a credible assessment of who Jesus was (1987, p. xx).

But how well do the New Testament documents compare with additional ancient, historical documents? F.F. Bruce examined much of the evidence surrounding this question in his book, *The New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?* As he and other writers (e.g., Metzger, 1968, p. 36; Geisler and Brooks, 1990, p. 159) have noted, there are 5,366 manuscripts of the Greek New Testament in existence today, in whole or in part, that serve to corroborate the accuracy of the New Testament. The best manuscripts of the New Testament are dated at roughly A.D. 350, with perhaps one of the most important of these being the Codex Vaticanus, “the chief treasure of the Vatican Library in Rome,” and the Codex Sinaiticus, which was purchased by the British from the Soviet Government in 1933 (Bruce, 1953, p. 20). Additionally, the Chester Beatty papyri, made public in 1931, contain eleven codices, three of which contain most of the New Testament (including the Gospels). Two of these codices boast of a date in the first half of the third century, while the third slides in a little later, being dated in the last half of the same century (Bruce, 1953, p. 21). The John Rylands Library boasts of even earlier evidence. A papyrus codex containing parts of John 18 dates to the time of Hadrian, who reigned from A.D. 117 to 138 (Bruce, 1953, p. 21).

Other attestation to the accuracy of the New Testament documents can be found in the writings of the so-called “apostolic fathers”—men who wrote primarily from

A.D. 90 to 160 (Bruce, 1953, p. 22). Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Tatian, Clement of Rome, and Ignatius (writing before the close of the second century) all provided citations from one or more of the Gospels (Guthrie, 1990, p. 24). Other witnesses to the early authenticity of the New Testament are the Ancient Versions, which consist of the text of the New Testament translated into different languages. The Old Latin and the Old Syriac are the most ancient, being dated from the middle of the second century (Bruce, 1953, p. 23).

The available evidence makes it clear that the Gospels were accepted as authentic by the close of the second century (Guthrie, p. 24). They were complete (or substantially complete) before A.D. 100, with many of the writings circulating 20-40 years before the close of the first century (Bruce, 1953, p. 16). Linton remarked concerning the Gospels:

A fact known to all who have given any study at all to this subject is that these books were quoted, listed, catalogued, harmonized, cited as authority by different writers, Christian and Pagan, right back to the time of the apostles (1943, p. 39).

Such an assessment is absolutely correct. In fact, the New Testament enjoys far more historical documentation than any other volume ever known. There are only 643 copies of Homer’s *Iliad*, which is undeniably the most famous book of ancient Greece. No one doubts the text of Julius Caesar’s *Galic Wars*, but we have only 10 copies of it, the earliest of which was made 1,000 years after it was written. To have such abundance of copies for the New Testament from within 70 years of their writing is nothing short of amazing (Geisler and Brooks, 1990, pp. 159-160).

Someone might allege that the New Testament documents cannot be trusted because the writers had an agenda. But this in itself does not render what they said untruthful, especially in the light of corroborating evidence from hostile witnesses. There are other histories that are accepted despite their authors’ agendas. An “agenda” does not nullify the possibility of accurate historical knowledge.

In his work, *The New Testament Documents—Are They Reliable?*, Bruce offered more astounding comparisons. Livy wrote 142 books of Roman history, of which a mere 35 survive. The 35 known books are made manifest due to some 20 manuscripts, only one of which is as old as the fourth century. We have only two manuscripts of Tacitus’ *Histories* and *Annals*, one from the ninth century and one from the eleventh. The *History of Thucydides*, another well-known ancient work, is dependent upon only eight manuscripts, the oldest of these being dated about A.D. 900 (along with a few papyrus scraps dated at the beginning of the Christian era). *The History of Herodotus* finds itself in a similar situation. “Yet no classical scholar would listen to an argument that the authenticity of Herodotus or Thucydides is in doubt because the earliest MSS of their works which are of any use to us are over 1,300 years later than the originals” (Bruce, 1953, pp. 20-21). Bruce thus declared: “It is a curious fact that historians have often been much readier to trust the New Testament records than have many theologians” (1953, p. 19). As Linton put it:

There is no room for question that the records of the words and acts of Jesus of Galilee came from the pens of the men who, with John, wrote what they had “heard” and “seen” and their hands had “handled of the Word of life” (1943, pp. 39-40).

CONCLUSION

When someone asks the question, “Is the life of Jesus Christ a historic event?,” he or she must remember that “If we maintain that the life of our Lord is not a historical event, we are landed in hopeless difficulties; in consistency, we shall have to give up all ancient history and deny that there ever was such an event as the assassination of Julius Caesar” (Monser, 1961, p. 377).



SPEAKING SCHEDULES

Dr. Bert Thompson

February 6	Adamsville, AL	(205) 674-5659
February 11-13	Dothan, AL	(334) 793-2280
February 18-20	Lamesa, TX	(806) 872-8369
February 25-27	Conyers, GA	(404) 922-8341

Faced with such overwhelming evidence, it is unwise to reject the position that Jesus Christ actually walked the streets of Jerusalem in the first century. As Harvey has remarked, there are certain facts about Jesus that “are attested by at least as much reliable evidence as are countless others taken for granted as historical facts known to us from the ancient world.” But lest I be accused of misquoting him, let me point out that Harvey went on to say, “It can still be argued that we can have no reliable historical knowledge about Jesus with regard to anything that really matters” (1982, p. 6).

Harvey could not deny the fact that Jesus lived on this Earth. Critics do not like having to admit it, but they cannot successfully deny the fact that Jesus had a greater impact on the world than any single life before or after. Nor can they deny the fact that Jesus died at the hands of Pontius Pilate. Harvey and others can say only that such facts “do not really matter.” I contend that the facts that establish the existence of Jesus Christ of Nazareth really **do** matter. As Bruce stated, “The earliest propagators of Christianity welcomed the fullest examination of the credentials of their message” (1953, p. 122). While Paul was on trial before King Agrippa, he said to Festus: “For the king knoweth of these things, unto whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him; for this hath not been done in a corner” (Acts 26:26).

As the earliest apologists of Christianity welcomed a full examination of the credentials of the message that they preached, so do we today. These credentials have been weighed in the balance and **not** found wanting. The simple fact of the matter is that Jesus Christ did exist and live among men.

It is impossible to say that no one has the right to be an agnostic. But no one has the right to be an agnostic till he has thus dealt with the question, and faced this fact with an open mind. After that, he may be an agnostic—if he can (Anderson, 1985, p. 12).

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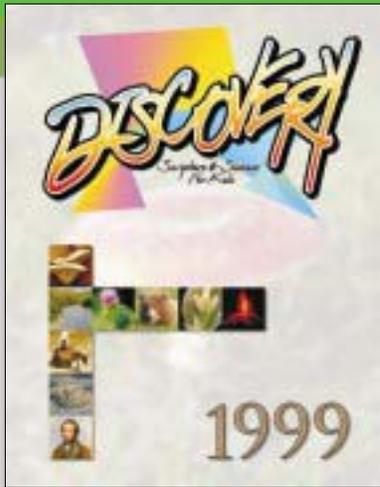
LATE-BREAKING SPECIAL

Just as this issue of *Reason & Revelation* was about to go to press, we received volume eight in our new “Scripture and Science” series, *The Bible and the Age of the Earth*, by Dr. Bert Thompson. This 126-page volume presents biblical teaching on the important topic of the age of the Earth and refutations of false doctrines that have been invented in an attempt to defend an ancient Earth (Day-Age Theory, Gap Theory, etc.). It also answers oft-asked questions like: “How long were Adam and Eve in the Garden?”; “Was the Earth created with the appearance of age?”; “What part do the biblical genealogies play in this controversy?”; and many more. Price is \$4.95, but you may buy it for \$3.95 (\$1.05 s/h) if you mention this special when you order by mail or phone (with credit card).



BOUND VOLUMES

DISCOVERY



Discovery is a monthly paper of Scripture and science written especially for kids. Each colorful and beautifully illustrated issue is filled with interesting articles designed to instill in children biblical faith in the Creator and His Word. Youngsters enjoy reading the articles, examining the pictures, and doing the activities. All volumes contain twelve issues and a comprehensive index, which makes them ideal reference tools for use in home schooling and Bible class situations.

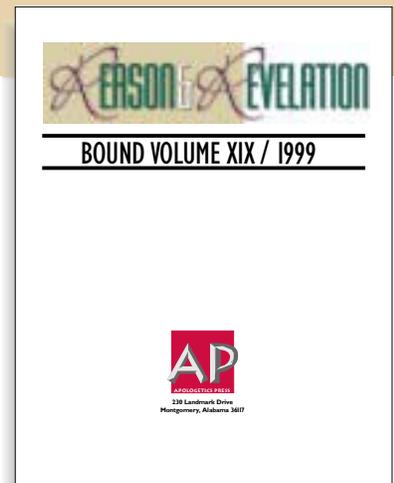
Currently, we have bound volumes available for 1995-1999. Normally, the price is \$12. However, as a “warehouse clearance special” **we are offering all five volumes at the special price of only \$40** (a savings of \$20; \$4 s/h).

REASON & REVELATION

At the end of each year, we produce a bound volume of *Reason & Revelation* (containing all 12 issues) that has a comb binding and an attractive, two-color, heavy-weight cover. The bound volume for 1999 now is available. Cost is \$8 (\$1.50 s/h).

However, we also have available bound volumes for the years from 1991-1998. As a “warehouse clearance special” **we are offering all nine volumes (1991-1999) at the special price of only \$45** (a savings of \$27; \$4.50 s/h).

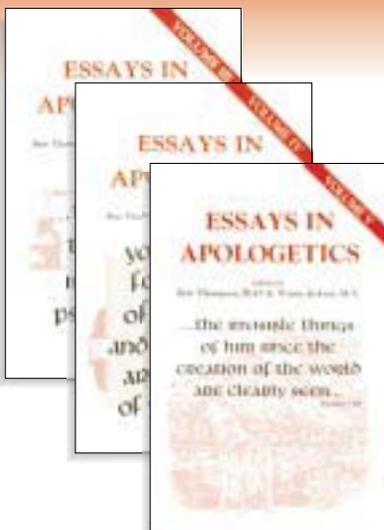
Once our supplies are depleted, the issues go out of print permanently. This is a good time to secure copies for posterity (for yourself, children, grandchildren, etc.).



While We're on the Subject...

ESSAYS IN APOLOGETICS

In the past, every two years we re-typeset *Reason & Revelation* and placed the articles into a paperback book format under the general title of *Essays in Apologetics*. We still have available three volumes in the *Essays* series. Volume III contains articles from *R&R* for 1985-1986, volume IV contains articles from 1987-1988, and volume V contains articles from 1989-1990. A table of contents and comprehensive index is included in each volume, which makes *Essays* a convenient and useful source of otherwise unavailable material. [If you were to purchase all three volumes of *Essays* and all nine bound volumes of *R&R*, you would have every *R&R* article from 1985 to 1999!] Normally each volume of *Essays* sells for \$4.95, but while supplies last (volume IV is almost out of print; we have less than a box left), **we are offering all three for the special price of \$11** (\$2.50 s/h). To order *Essays* (specify volume number) or bound volumes of *Reason & Revelation* or *Discovery* (specify year) via credit card, call us toll-free at 800/234-8558.





NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

INTRODUCING—OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF BIBLICAL RESEARCH

As many of our readers are aware, Apologetics Press celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 1999. And what a marvelous twenty years it has been! Along the way, the work has flourished in ways we never could have dreamed. From the smallest of beginnings that included two typewriters and a couple of boxes of stationery, it has grown into a work that—if we are to believe the mail that comes across our desks each day—has blessed the lives of countless thousands of people, both young and old alike.

Over the last 2-3 years, however, the growth has been so phenomenal that, at times, my staff and I have had a little trouble keeping up (we never even entertain the idea of actually getting ahead!). Trevor Major, our Director of Scientific Information, and I share the day-to-day responsibilities associated with the work, which includes researching, writing, and editing articles for our two monthly journals (*Reason and Revelation* for adults and *Discovery* for children), writing new books and tracts, producing new audio and video tapes, keeping the A.P. Web site current, responding to the hundreds of requests for information and assistance that pour into our offices monthly, etc. We have been serving as the only two full-time professional staff members since late in 1996, and so all of these responsibilities have been ones that we have had to assume by necessity.

As thrilled as we have been about the tremendous growth, Trevor and I had to face the fact that we no longer could handle the day-to-day responsibilities by ourselves. For example, the number of people subscribing to *Reason and Revelation* almost tripled in a little over a year, going from 4,000 subscribers in 1998 to almost 14,000 as of this month; the number of children receiving *Discovery* doubled—from 5,000 to 10,000! And new



subscriptions are pouring into our offices daily (just ask our three hard-working secretaries—Glenda, LaRose, and Amanda). We desperately needed another full-time professional staff member to assist us. But, as most of our readers also know, we are extremely cautious in our hiring procedures. We want to ensure that the soundness of the work is protected for many years to come so that the blessings derived from it may be available for generations even yet unborn.

For approximately the past two years, I have had my eye on an amazing young man by the name of Kyle Butt, whom I believed had the potential to be a tremendous asset to our work. Kyle, who is 23, holds earned B.A. and M.A. degrees in Bible from Freed-Hardeman University. He not only is a faithful, dedicated Christian who is brimming with youthful energy, but also is a good writer and, truth be told, one of the best young speakers I have ever heard.

As Kyle neared completion of his baccalaureate degree, I invited him to visit us in Montgomery. I explained to him that we were in the market for a young man to serve

as our Director of Biblical Research and asked if he might be interested in filling that position upon completion of his Master's degree. He immediately accepted our offer and, on January 3, began his new job with us (after a requisite honeymoon—since on December 11 he married his fiancée, Bethany Glass). All of us at Apologetics Press are thrilled that Kyle is onboard and are anxious for you to get to know him. To that end, I have asked him to write the feature article in this month's issue of *Reason & Revelation* (the first of many, I can assure you). I commend this young man to you unreservedly. Call or write him if he can help you in any way.

— Bert Thompson