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Apologetics (Bibliology)

Apologetics can be understood as the philosophical, theological and historical demonstration of the *truthfulness* of Christian theological claims.

Jeff Connell, PhD_(abd)

Phone: 252.229.4540

Email: jeff.connell@asimplegrace.net

Blog: asimplegrace.net

Terms Commonly Encountered

Apocrypha - A corpus of noncanonical religious literature of doubtful authorship and authority.

Canon - The corpus of literature accepted as an authoritative witness and normative as holy scripture for a religious community.

Extracanonical - The property of being outside a canon of books that are held sacred.

Gnostic (or Gnosticism) - A early heresy that purported a “higher” plane of knowledge through mystical existence and experiences is necessary to be an authentic Christian.

Pseudepigrapha - Literally, “false writing.” Writing purported to be from a legitimate author, but actually written spuriously.

Jamnia - Often referred to as the “Council of Jamnia,” or the “college of Jamnia.” A reference to a conclave of Judaic scholars and rabbis that met around A. D. 90 in Jamnia (in upper Galilee). Many late nineteenth century Bible scholars contended one of the results of Jamnia was the selection of which ancient Jewish religious writings were to be included in (or excluded from) the Old Testament. Late twentieth century biblical scholars dismiss those claims as overly inclusive.

Nag Hammadi scrolls: A collection of 13 ancient papyri texts discovered in 1945. Most are Gnostic. Also known as Dead Sea scrolls.

Scripture - In a Christian context, the books of the Old and New Testament.

Septuagint (or LXX) - Greek translation of the Old Testament including the Apocrypha prepared in the 3d and 2d centuries B.C., constituting the first vernacular translation of the Bible, designed to meet the needs of Greek-speaking Jews unable to read their Scriptures in Hebrew.

Synoptic Gospels - Matthew, Mark, and Luke. So named because they share many literary phrases and features.

Theopneustos - The word Paul used in 2 Timothy 3:16 to describe the origin, and thereby the authority and usefulness of Scripture. Most often translated “inspired,” literally it means “God-breathed.”

Historicity

Three general tests: Bibliographical, internal, and external.

The internal test queries if the document itself claims to be an actual history written by eyewitnesses. The external test queries if material external to the text (e. g., archeological evidence or external writings) confirms the reliability of the document. The bibliographical test queries how many manuscript copies are extant, and how far removed are they from the originals.

A Comparison of Bibliographical Data

Author	When Written	Earliest Copy	Time Span	No. of Copies
Caesar	100-44 B.C.	A.D. 900	1,000 yrs	10
Tacitus	A. D. 100	A.D. 1000	1,000 yrs	20 (-)
Aristotle	384-322 B.C.	A.D. 1100	1,400 yrs	~5
Syriac New Testament	A.D. 150-250	A.D. 400	250 yrs	350
Vulgate	A.D. 382-405	~A.D. 410	5 yrs - 400 yrs	8,000
Greek man.	A.D. 48-70	A.D. 120	72 yrs	5,000
Patristics		A.D. 325	~10 yrs	32,000