M03A1 History

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Chapter 1 - Historical/Legal Apologetics

This article, or lecture if I may describe these articles, focuses on the historical thread underlying Christian faith and doctrine. Drs. Phillip and Cherian point out that no other religion’s sacred texts claim to come from histories. Any histories in other sacred books, even if they contain histories, do not rely on the historical stories to be true. Their philosophical and theological claims do not fall if the historical narratives might be inaccurate.

These professors point out that “the Christian faith is solidly and inseparably based upon history.” The accuracy of the biblical histories is a presupposition for Christian truths and beliefs. Because of this “depend[ence] upon the historicity of the events recorded in the Bible”, those who attack fundamental Christian faith know that if this historical foundation can be destroyed, Christianity will crumble. I will note that Seventh-day Adventist evangelists focus our apologetic message on the prophecies of Daniel. These prophecies foretell major events to happen over 2300 years with such accuracy that detractors try to date Daniel forward by hundreds of years.

This dependence on historical significance prompts Christian activity into archeology and history. This lecture discusses the following:

1-Tools Of Legal Method/Apologetics

2-Tools Of Historical Apologetics

3-Application Of The Tools

4-Other Values Of Historical Investigations

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**Tools of Legal Apologetics**

Legal experts carefully reconstruct the past series of events, gathering sources and cross examining(comparing) these sources. Circumstantial evidence must be substantial. Consistency and probability beyond reasonable doubt must be determined. Even in the natural and mathematical sciences not every instance can be tested, total proof is beyond science. But in those instances tested, consistent outcomes must be observed. The same applies to historical evidence.

**Tools Of Historical Apologetics**

**1-Archaeology**

**2-Dating Techniques**

**3-Linguistic Studies**

**4-Present Status Of Manuscripts**

Archaeology deals with the study of ancient civilizations. According to this lecture, In 1798 Napoleon indirectly commissioned the first archaeological expedition to systematically study the ancient monuments and artifacts of Egypt. Initially these scientists came to survey and build roads, head up the manufacture of military ammunition, and identify and source food for Napoleon’s army. As scientists they extended their vision, studying local plants and fish; made technical drawings of the monuments in Thebes, Karnak, Abydos; and discovered Egyptian jars for keeping drinks and liquids cold for days. Importantly they discovered the Rosetta Stone.The newspaper, Le Courrier d’Egypte, began publishing. <https://www.napoleon.org/en/young-historians/napodoc/bonaparte-in-egypt-2-the-scientific-expedition/>

Biblical archaeology soon developed upon realizing much could possibly be learned from similar explorations in biblical lands.

Soon after the emergence of public and scholarly interest in evolution arrived, giving scriptural doubters hope to scientifically and historically impune the Bible’s historic reliability, Christian scholars united with Christian archeologists and today a “vast amount of Biblical history and chronology has already been correlated with the corresponding secular history.” I occasionally see even the public press feature new historical confirmations.

Until the 1950s, I believe, Bible detractors held up the Babylonian calendar and gleefully pointing to different dates for the conquest of Jerusalem, capture of Zedekiah. Jeremiah’s date failed to match the date from Babylonia’s records. But research found that Judah followed a different calendar (and in fact Judah and Israel followed different calendars). Scripture again held up historically. <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1051&context=auss>

Sometimes items can be dated by proximity to other items already recognized from history. Pottery can be matched by styles which vary by historical periods. Then there is Radiocarbon Dating. I personally would question carbon dating since I read the claim that “oldest dates that can be reliably measured by this process date to approximately 50,000 years ago.” I’ve never understood biblical history to greatly exceed 7,000 years.

Excavations and accidental finds of manuscripts and clay engravings in the last 100+ years provide a greater understanding of ancient times, secular and religious; and scripture. It’s as if God held these materials in His secret archive until Darwin inspired revolt against scripture. Prof. Robert Dick Wilson received a special gift of tongues to understand and explain ancient texts. He is quoted saying “I have come to the conviction that no man knows enough to attack the veracity of the Old Testament. Every time when anyone has been able to get together enough documentary 'proofs' to undertake an investigation, the biblical facts in the original text have victoriously met the test.” <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Dick_Wilson> Much of his work was published in the The Princeton Theological Review, painstakingly refuting champions of Higher Criticism claiming flaws in the Bible.

We today have New Testament manuscripts from within 20 years of the resurrection of Christ. We have Old Testament manuscripts from 500+ years before Christ during the time of Malachi.

Greek is spoken but it differs from the Classical Greek of Aristotle. Biblical Greek differs from Aristotle’s Greek. In a class by Bill Mounce I learned that Biblical Greek comes from commercial Greek between business persons at the time of Jesus. No one today speaks classical or biblical Greek as a natural language. Of course, modern English only vaguely resembles Olde English.

Biblical Hebrew is closer to modern Hebrew, but this is because modern Hebrew is a revived language combining Biblical Hebrew with rabbinic and classical Hebrew. Modern Hebrew contains 100,000+- words vs the 8,000 Biblical Hebrew words. These new words derive similar to the Biblical. Of course modern words sometimes refer to different objects. And Biblical Hebrew writings contain no punctuation. <https://langfocus.com/language-features/how-different-are-modern-hebrew-and-biblical-hebrew/>

Ancient Persian I would think is at least vaguely similar to modern Persian.

Other biblical languages may have been forgotten although perhaps reconstructed from sources similar to the Rosetta Stone from Egypt. This engraving told the same story in hieroglyphic, Hieratic simplified hieroglyphics, a more current looking demotic script, and Ancient Greek. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rosetta_Stone>

Our Christian faith is firmly rooted in history. If the history fails, the theology accompanying it fails as well. We learn much about the power of God armed with even greater mercy through His interactions in history with His people. We stand in awe at His unfolding of answers to atheist attacks and Higher Criticism demeaning the understandings of biblical history.

Chapter 2 - Jesus and History

Few if any scholars doubt that Jesus lived. But he’s attacked because of a gap of 30-40 years before books of Him were written. Yet the gap of 400+ years between Plato and writings is ignored. The gap for Aristotle is 1300 years. When God himself comes and speaks the world wants to ignore Him. <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/davearmstrong/2015/10/manuscript-evidence-nt-vs-plato-etc.html>

Non practicing or believing persons wrote confirming Jesus life and sometimes even miracles. Flavious Josephus, a Jewish general, wrote a respected history mentioning Jesus, His wonderful works (miracles ?) and brother James. Corenelius Tacitus, a Roman historian, documents Jesus’ execution by Pontius Pilate and the scapegoating by Nero of Christians for the fires in Rome. He also mentions the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Even some of the Jewish Talmuds written in the early centuries after Christ came mention Jesus, his miracles, and his virgin birth. Jesus was a source of satire by Lucian of Samosata, not specifically a historian. Jesus attracted attention by both Christian and non-Christian writers, some serious histories and some, we can say, in a pop-cultural style. He can’t be relegated to a person of mere legend.

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I happened to click on a Twitter link from JON PAULIEN, PhD,professor of religion and dean of the School of Religion at Loma Linda University. It showed this link about the closing dig after more than 50 years at the Madaba Plains Project, the longest-lasting archaeological collaboration in Jordan, which has carried out excavations at Tall Hisban (biblical Heshbon), Tall al-‘Umayri, and Tall Jalul. The biblical connection was ancient Moab and Ammon. The story pointed out that although the motivation was biblical, serious ethics can’t plow past other periods of time. Arabic finds preceded Greek and Roman finds before getting to the levels of biblical intention. The study began by Dr. Siegfried Herbert Horn, a Seventh-day Adventist archaeologist and Professor of History of Antiquity at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan in 1968. The video tells of the collaboration among historians, archaeologists, geologists, and sociologists.

<https://mobile.twitter.com/spectrummag/status/1465513169216933893>

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