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Biblical Apologetics  
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1. Define inspiration. How would you apologetically defend this doctrine?

Answer: Paul wrote to Timothy: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness..." (2 Timothy 3:16) "Inspired" in this text means "God-breathed." That is, the Bible is the Word of God, because it has been produced – the verb is passive – by God Himself.

Furthermore, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter states: "for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." The verb here – phe-e-ro – is the same one used at Acts 27 where the wind "moves" the ship on the sea. This verb means "carried along," or "born" as in the ship was "born" by the wind. In the same way, the men who wrote Scripture were "carried along" by God as the Scriptures were written.

From these two Scriptures, we understand inspiration to be plenary – every single word – was produced by God and is from God, completely reliable and true (in every respect, not only in regards to salvation and morality, but also in regards to history and other details), and these were produced by God in such a way that He used the unique personalities, styles and resources of each man He carried along. Thus, we may say that Scripture is both divine and human. Divine in that it is from God and human in that God used men to write it. This by the way presents a fascinating parallel to Christ who as true God took on human flesh.

Part II: How would you apologetically defend this doctrine? The authors of Scripture clearly identify the Word as Scripture. Peter refers to Paul's writings as Scripture (2 Peter 3:16) and Paul refers to both the Torah (Deuteronomy) and the Gospel of Luke as Scripture at 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 5:18.

Now let's consider the significance of all this. These writers are Hebrews. Their entire worldview is one that advocates faithfulness to God, living in His presence and abiding by His Law. If they were lying, they would completely be violating their background as believing Jews. Keep in mind that they were making their testimony in the presence of other Jews. They would have been considered as liars and complete scoundrels.

Secondly, and more importantly, they would have been contradicting the very teaching of Jesus Christ Himself. The Lord taught truthfulness and condemned lying as sin. It does not make sense that not only would they set themselves up for ridicule, but also contradict the very One they were serving!

Finally, they had nothing to gain (from a worldly perspective) and everything to lose in putting this teaching forth. All they gained was ostracism and persecution. Yet, they remained faithful to this clear teaching! What is more, they continued in their teaching to the point that they gave their very lives for the truth of the Word of God and their inspired proclamation as coming from God Himself.

Now, if the above answers in regards the apostles is not enough for you, there is much more I can offer you. For example, we can speak of the signs of miracles that accompanied the giving of the Word of God, we may look at historical tests that lend the ring of reliability of these (the Bibliographical, Internal Evidence and External Evidence tests), and many other aspects. However, one of the fundamental witnesses of inspiration is the effect the Word of God has upon lives. It is truly the power of God unto salvation, sharper than a two-edged sword and the means of God creating faith in the hearts of men...look at the what this inspired Word has accomplished in the real lives of men!

2. Summarize the false views of inspiration.

Answer: There are several false views of inspiration. Many of them seek to maintain certain nobility in their perspectives towards the Bible. In effect, however, all of them compromise the truth that the Bible is in every respect the Word of God, inspired and inerrant.

- A. One view is the dictation theory of inspiration. This theory completely by-passes the truth of God using the unique abilities and knowledge of the men who wrote the Word of God. It advocates that the Word was simply dictated to them. If this were true, however, then all of Scripture would have an identical style and it would also compromise some of the inherent historical strengths of the Word. For example, the clear diversity of dozens of human authors over centuries of time in various places, actually speaks for the Scriptures being beyond compromising theories of collaboration and collusion. The dictation theory undermines this fact.
- B. Other views are related to various forms of partial inspiration. In this context, there are variations:
  - i. Concept/Idea Inspiration: Only the concepts and basic ideas were inspired by God, but not the words themselves.
  - ii. Salvation Inspiration: That is, only those aspects in the Bible pertaining to salvation or morality are dependable as inspired, but not the historical aspects that are suspect.

- C. C.S. Lewis's view: Surprisingly, C.S. Lewis had a version of "B" above, that is, a version of partial inspiration. Lewis treated the parts on salvation to be inspired. Thus, he believed that the record of the incarnation, the life of Christ, His death and resurrection were and are all true. However, Lewis considered many other parts as mythological. For example, Adam and Eve were not real historical persons. Other parts of the Bible, such as the imprecatory Psalms interfered with the voice of God in that God could not really be heard in such accounts. Finally, he asserted that there were many contradictions in the Bible itself. For example, one account of Judas being hung contradicts the other account of his falling and his bowels coming out (these, however, are not contradictory at all, but complimentary).
- D. There is also the view from Neo-Orthodoxy. K. Barth and Neo-Orthodoxy saw the inability of higher critical approaches unable to answer the real needs of people after the first World War. This sought to identify a real life-changing power in the Word of God again. However, it was still very much a compromise. In this system, the Bible is not in itself the Word of God and inspired. Rather, the Word of God must be existentially encountered as the Bible is read and heard. It is "inspired" only in the sense of what one may potentially encounter.
- E. Of course, there is also the view that the "inspiration" of Scripture is simply referring to what other works offer by being "inspirational." God may speak to people through various writings and various means and people may be inspired by God through any of these. The Bible is but one of these possible offerings in the world.
- F. There is also the version of Neo-Evangelicalism reacting to modernistic trends and even fundamentalism. However, it too while getting closer to what is Biblical and true, is a sure compromise. This is another example of the claim that not every word is inspired, but only some words. It is a version of partial inspiration.

3. Define inerrancy. How would you apologetically defend this doctrine?

Answer: Inerrancy is a corollary of inspiration. Some say the Bible does not explicitly teach this, but there is monumental weight that says it does so in a clear implicit manner. The Word comes from God, it is God-breathed, it is sufficient for salvation, and it is true. From all of this it is easy to conclude that it is beyond error; the Scriptures are infallible. Young is sure to include every aspect of what the Scriptures teach in his definition, including historical details.

The definition pertains to the Autographs, the original manuscripts. It is not contradicted in any way by phenomenological language, approximations, partial quotations of the OT in the NT, figures of speech, figurative language, etc. What is pertinent is the fact that all that is said is completely trustworthy, is true and without any error whatsoever be in regards to all that the Scriptures contain.

Part II: How would you apologetically defend this doctrine?

Answer: Think about this principle: If you can absolutely trust something in regards to little things, minute details that are easy to dismiss and overlook, what does say for why you would trust that same thing in regards to more important things. We employ this principle every day. If we meet someone and grow to trust them and love them, we may very well marry them and decide to trust them even more. If we drink water from the tap and determine that it does not cause heart attacks and strokes, we continue to drink on a long term basis. If we trust road signs for minor details of our driving, we also trust road signs for major details for our driving.

Now, there are three tests that prove that the Bible is trustworthy and without error in regards to history. And history isn't even a minor thing, it is a major thing. However, we find that the Bible is perfectly reliable in what it presents from a historical perspective, this is a major motivation for us to also trust in regards to spiritual matters.

The first test is the Bibliographical Test. Here we consider the manuscript evidence of the Bible. Consider for instance, the 1947, Qumran find of the Dead Sea Scrolls. At the time, our earliest OT Hebrew manuscript was the masoretic text dated around the A.D. 900. However, the Dead Sea Scrolls are dated around 50 to 150 (some say 250) B.C. That is, there is a 1000 year difference in the two Hebrew and Aramaic sources. However, when you compare these manuscripts and compare the major prophet book of Isaiah, there is but a miniscule 5% variation. They are essentially the same. When one compares these results to the Greek translation of the OT (the Septuagint) the results are very much the same.

The significance of all this is that completely different manuscripts written at different times and in different places by different people are consistent. This means that the probability that they represent the original dramatically increases. If there are so many divergent verifications of what are supposedly the original words, that the original words are indeed accurately represented.

This dynamic more than applies to the New Testament. When one considers the Greek, Syriac and Latin (and other ancient copies), there are over 24,000 ancient copies of the New Testament. Now, this is especially impressive when one compares these numbers to other ancient works of antiquity. Not only are there far far fewer

copies of say Homer's Iliad, but the time-span variation between the original work and most recent copy is much greater. Some of the earliest pieces of manuscripts from the New Testament are within 25-125 years of the original!

Secondly, we ought believe the Bible is inerrant because of Internal Evidence. The primary rule here is that unless there is evidence of tampering, clear inaccuracies and/or contradictions, that we should accept the documents at face value. Applying this rule to the New Testament leads us to recognize the strong aspect of eye-witness testimony. Not only are there clear, non-contradictory claims, but these are spoken even in the presence of hostile witnesses many of whom were factually aware of the facts listed. This kind of clarity and boldness testifies to accuracy and truth.

Thirdly, we ought believe the Bible is inerrant because of External Evidence. There are four aspects here: a. Historical verification from Christian sources; b. Historical verification from non-Christian sources; c. Archaeology; and d. Messianic Prophecy. Let's just mention one of these, non-Christian verification. Such historians as Tacitus, Pliny the Younger and Josephus (both Roman and Jewish perspectives) verify many of the historical aspects of the Christian faith. Again, the Bible is shown to be accurate, true and without error in regards to historical detail.

If you can trust the Bible in regards to the little things, what does this say of our ability to trust it in regards to the spiritual teaching? Before we close, however, let us get back to the testimony of the apostles and the apostolic assistants themselves. If this Word of God were less than completely accurate and true without error, would they have given their very lives for its proclamation? Of course not!

4. Summarize the qualifications for inerrancy discussed in class.

Answer: There are several aspects to take into consideration:

- A. First of all, inerrancy applies strictly to the original autographs.
- B. Phenomenological language does not disqualify inerrancy. We may hear that "the sun rises" but this is understood from the human perspective, it is not to be construed as a scientific inaccuracy.
- C. Figures of speech also do not disqualify inerrancy. The Bible uses such tools as hyperbole (the use of extreme exaggeration to make a point). The truth being taught is completely true and inerrant.
- D. Partial quotations of the OT into the NT do not disqualify inerrancy.

- E. Quotations from other literary works do not disqualify inerrancy nor does it suggest that those sources are inerrant. However, the context in which these are used in Scripture are inerrant.
- F. Also the fact that the Bible records lies or anti-Christian aspects does not disqualify inerrancy. Psalm 14 does say "There is no God." But this is in the context: "The FOOL says in his heart, 'There is no God.'"
- G. Partial accounts of an event do not disqualify inerrancy. Were there two angels or one angel at the empty tomb? Well, it is a fact that whenever you have two, you have one!
- H. Seeming contradictions do not disqualify inerrancy. Here, we ought follow Augustine. If we don't see something, it's either because a copiest error or we just don't understand. The Bible is innocent until proven guilty NOT the other way around!!!!

5. Summarize and explain the tests of canonicity:

Answer: "Canon" means rule, norm, standard, measuring reed or rod. This refers to how it was determined that the Bible consists of the books it consists of. This was not by human decision, but rather divine providence. The Lord led this gradual and yet lucid process, over time, and over the church universal.

We can appreciate the tests which were employed:

- A. Was the book from a prophet, apostle or direct assistant of such? This refers to apostolic authority and origin. For example, we can feel pretty good about the Gospel of Matthew actually produced by the apostle or the Gospel of Mark, the close assistant to St. Peter.
- B. Is the book consistent with the rule of faith or the test of orthodoxy. That is, is the teaching consistent with and true to revelation already received. If a writing for example contradicts that there is One God, then we know to trash it. If the writing suggests a different way of salvation outside of Christ, then it does not belong to the canon.
- C. Did the book receive early church recognition and use? Did the early fathers testify to their legitimacy? Did the church employ these in her divine services? Were these read by the early church and considered authoritative?
- D. Were these works accompanied with other signs? Often, miracles are connected to these works.

- E. Do these works have the ring of “Thus says the Lord?”
  - F. Does the book have a transforming effect upon people?
6. What evidence is there that the canon was already being recognized in biblical days? Include Scripture references.

Answer: There is the claim that even the concept of canon did not come until centuries after the Bible was written. Nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible itself recognizes books that are considered to be “Scripture,” that is authoritative and from the Lord Himself. The Scriptural examples are the following:

- A. 2 Peter 3:15b-16: “...Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

Here, Peter is saying that the letters of St. Paul are considered like “the rest of the Scriptures.” Thus, all 13 of Paul’s epistles ought be included in the canon!

- B. 1 Timothy 5:18 says, “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,’ and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’”

Here, Paul makes reference to the Pentateuch, specifically the book of Deuteronomy which contains the first quotation. And then – and this is truly exciting – he takes a quotation from the Gospel of St. Luke (the second quote of the verse). In doing this Paul calls both Deuteronomy and Luke “Scripture.” The Gospel is as authoritative as the Torah!!!

The Canon was already being recognized during Biblical days. Obviously, there is the most important testimony of Christ Himself that the Law and Prophets were authoritative (I think of Luke 24 where Christ teaches that He is the subject of the OT on the road to Emmaus) and that what His apostles would write would be authoritative. Matthew 10:20: “For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.”

7. What biblical books were doubted for a time in regard to canonicity? Summarize the initial objection to each book (include which rule/rules of canonicity at stake), and how/why the objection was overcome.

Answer: There were several books from both the Old Testament and New Testament considered to be in doubt in terms of whether they should be included in the Canon. Here are some examples:

- A. Song of Solomon: The vivid sexual and sensual language raised many eyebrows. The rule in question relates to doctrine and teaching and the thus saith the Lord ring. However, later it was included because of the popular church view that this is actually account/description of Christ and His bride, the Church.
- B. Ecclesiastes: This was called into question per its pessimistic tone; the vanities of vanities. Again, this would relate to the teaching aspect where many books are so hopeful and encouraging. Even Lamentations has a very hopeful part in it! However, this was taken as wisdom to show that without God, life is indeed deserving of pessimism. This, however, is not the only part to Ecclesiastes because it ultimately teaches that to know God gives life meaning and proper perspective.
- C. Esther: Called into question per doctrine as well. The Name of the Lord is not mentioned even once. However, the book actually teaches about the Lord's presence in powerful ways. His providence reigns supreme for the good of His faithful people.
- D. James: Called into question per doctrine. Was it contradicting the teaching of salvation via works righteousness: "Faith without works is dead"??? However, this is not the case. Even Luther changed his mind about this book! In reality, the works spoken of here are the works of faith, the works of the Law which Paul condemns in Romans. True saving faith produces fruit, good works. We are saved by faith alone, and faith is never alone.
- E. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Peter for the reason that it is so stylistically different than 1<sup>st</sup>. Peter. However, this was overcome in that the doctrine is pure and consistent and because of other early church testimony.
- F. 2<sup>nd</sup>. and 3<sup>rd</sup>. John because of identify questions on the author. It says, "the elder," but the apostle could also appropriately refer to himself this way as well.
- G. Jude because it mentions contents from the books of Enoch and Moses. However, the doctrinal integrity was shown to be in Jude as well.
- H. Revelation. There was an early church cult that emphasized the 1000 year reign of Christ on earth. Also, the strong apocalyptic genre raised doubts. However, it was realized that the doctrine and christological nature are completely consistent with Scripture.
- I. Oh yes, Hebrews, since we do not know the author, but again the doctrine is impeccable.



8. What external evidence exists for the reliability of the New Testament?

I briefly mentioned the four (4) aspects above. I will give more detail here.

- A. There are historical accounts written by Christian authors. Eusebius is a well known source, but we can get much earlier than Eusebius and get back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century with Athanasius, but can do back even earlier by looking at the direct assistant of John, Polycarp and his direct disciple, Iraneus. Others, like Tertullian were also of the 2<sup>nd</sup>. century A.D. These and many, many more, verify the history of the New Testament.
  
- B. There are also historical accounts written by non-Christian authors. I mentioned Tacitus, Pliny the Younger and Josephus above. But it is especially amazing in that these non-Christian sources have no reason to be sympathetic to Christianity. However, the existence, life and death of Christ are clearly verified. But even more, in one form or another, they strongly acknowledge the clear belief of the Christians that Christ rose and is alive.
  
- C. Archaeology also verifies the Scriptures. Here are just a few examples:
  - #1: Luke's geographical and chronological aspects have been checked out and shown to be accurate.
  
  - #2: The existence of certain civilizations once doubted were verified like the Hettites.
  
  - #3: Luke's "tetrachs" has been verified from a discovered archway.
  
  - #4: The supposed design of the Philistine temple where Sampson caused it all come down on the Philistines has been verified through the discovery of two temples with ceilings dependent on two pillars only six feet apart.
  
  - #5: Caiphas's existence verified through family ossuary.
  
  - #6: Walls of Jericho crumbled down, with the exception of one North section where Rahab probably was.
  
  - #7: Sodom and Gommorah found at SE side of Salt Sea. There is a high amount of sulfur.
  
  - #8: Jerusalem's underground water tunnel fits the testimony of Hezekiah.

#9: Law code of Hammurabi prove that writing was in existence during time of Moses.

#10: Ziggurats discovered that fit discription of tower of babel.

D. Messianic Prophecies: There are over 300+ OT testament prophecies of Christ in the New Testament. However, when we consider the mathematical odds of this reality, the numbers are staggering! For example for just 8 prophecies to come to fruition in just one person, the chances are 1 in 10 E 17!!!! That is like filling up the state of Texas with two feet of silver dollars, painting one red and putting it anywhere, blind fold a man and send him out looking for it, the chances of his finding it are 1 in 10 E 17 power!!!!

9. What internal evidence exists for the reliability of the New Testament?

Besides what I touched on above, I would offer the following:

First of all, is the quality of the apostolic witness. Consider the following verses:

- A. 2 Peter 1:16: "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty."
- B. 1 John 1:1: "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life..."

This is based on eye-witness accounts. Now it is one thing to have your thumb in your navel in a dark closet and say that you saw God. This would be completely unverifiable. But it is another to make the wide-open eye-witness claim which is subject to other eye-witnesses. This provides strong, strong internal evidence.

Secondly, as I have already mentioned more than once, the disciples were willing to give their lives for this testimony. They would not have suffered and died for a lie.

Thirdly, is the historical characteristics of the Bible itself, such as genealogies, embarrassing aspects recorded, verification of hostile witnesses seeing what the apostles saw, factual claims, denial of myth, etc. etc.

10. Summarize at least five archaeological discoveries that substantiate the historicity of the Bible.

Answer: See above under “External Evidence” question.

11. What evidences are there that the biblical writings are intended as history?

I will elaborate a little on what I mentioned at #9.

#1: Genealogies give credence to real time, real people and real events. They track the true existence of real people in history. This kind of characteristic is amazing. For example, Genesis 10 has 5 times the historical markers as the entire book of Koran!

#2: There is the explicit denial of myth. It is interesting that in actual mythological works that the last thing they want to do is talk about myth itself. The Bible flatly rejects it.

#3: Chronological detail: Luke 3:1 starts off: “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontus Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod...”

#4: Embarrassing aspects recorded: If I were trying to start a false religion, I would probably want to avoid all negative, and possibly refuting aspects. The Bible will have none of this since it is recording reality. Peter the great apostle of the Lord denied Christ three times, women – not men – were the first ones to see Christ risen from the grave (and at the time the testimony of women was not respected), the disciples were preoccupied with who was the greatest and even the boldness of the testifying to the cross of Christ itself which is a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.

#5: Again, eye-witness testimony, but not just any. Note here the words from Acts 2:22: “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know...” Even those critical of their ministry, could not deny that they themselves saw and heard for themselves!

12. What arguments do Roman Catholics offer in support of the canonicity of the Apocrypha? What facts argue against the canonicity of the Apocrypha? (Include Scripture where appropriate).

Answer: Roman Catholics say that the Apocrypha ought be in the canon for the following reasons:

#1: The Apocrypha was included in the Greek translation of the OT, the Septuagint.

#2: The great church father, Augustine, approved of the Apocrypha.

#3: Some church councils, e.g. Rome approved of the inclusion of the Apocrypha.

#4: The Council of Trent says that if anyone denies the Apocrypha that they will be eternally damned.

#5: The Apocrypha was found with the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran.

#6: The Apocrypha contains many of the doctrines contained in the sacred tradition of the Roman Catholic Church.

#7: Holy men and martyrs are represented by the Apocrypha.

Now, despite all of the above claims, there are just two many reasons to doubt the canonicity of the Apocrypha. The first one and probably biggest one is that there is a 1,500 year span of time between their writing and their final inclusion into the canon by the Roman Catholic Church. There has never been this kind of incredible time span for any other book of the Bible. But here are other reasons not to accept it:

#2: The Apocryphal books no where claim inspiration.

#3: None of them were authored by prophets or apostles.

#4: 2 Maccabees even calls into question its own authority.

#5: Other church fathers either do not mention them or do mention them and deny canonicity to them.

#6: The earlier councils do not recognize them.

#7: There is spurious doctrine in them to say the least. For example, there is the teaching of alms being able to save as well as the teaching that we may pray to angels. Here, the rule of faith or test of orthodoxy is clearly breached that all teaching must be consistent with and true to previously established revelation. What is more both Galatians and Revelation will not allow us to add to the Biblical record.

#8: There were other finds at Qumran, should those other finds also be considered Scripture? No!

#9: The apocrypha was added much, much later to the Septuagint.

13. What arguments do Roman Catholics offer in support of the authority of tradition? What facts argue against the authority of tradition and in favor of sola scriptura? (Include Scripture where appropriate.)

Answer: From the Roman Catholic point of view the following would be considered as supporting their view of tradition:

#1: Scripture itself teaches tradition. For example, 2 Thessalonians 2:15: “So then, brethren stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or mouth or by letter from us.”

#2: No where does the Bible explicitly teach sola Scriptura.

#3: The church has historically used oral tradition in establishing for example the Creeds.

#4: Church councils have supported tradition.

#5: If one does not support this level of tradition, how will the Scriptures be properly interpreted? Otherwise, divisions will take over the church.

#6: Christ established apostolic succession through St. Peter and the future popes, the vicar of Christ on earth, is part of this sacred tradition of the Church.

#7: Christ referred to the chair of Moses and this is another form of established tradition even recognized by Christ the Savior.

There are many other arguments offered by Roman Catholicism along these lines, however, there are clear facts that counter the whole concept.

#1: First of all, the teaching of sola Scriptura doesn't need to be explicit in Scripture. For example, the “Holy Trinity” is not explicitly stated, but we recognize certain teaching from what is clearly taught in other respects. In respect of sola Scriptura, Scriptural inspiration and truth is clearly taught. These are attributed to nothing else.

#2: Peter is not the first pope, but an apostle among other apostle. The authority given to him was actually given to the whole church, it belongs to Christ, but it is known only through the Word of God itself.

#3: The tradition spoken of in Scripture as cited above refers to the teaching that was in process of being inscripturated. In other words, that “tradition” is now in the Bible.

#4: In regards to the early church oral tradition, that was before the closing of the Canon...it served as providential witness towards that goal. But once that goal was realized by the Spirit's leading and the canon was established, there is no need for that oral tradition.

#5: As for possible divisions, Ephesians 2:20 makes our foundation sure: It is based on the already established witness of the apostles on the chief cornerstone of Christ. We have this foundation in Scripture, any division is strictly the result of forsaking the Word of God.

#6: Other referrals to tradition in Scripture refer to what was either the invention of men (and therefore negative tradition) or legitimate intra-Scriptural tradition which is the self-same Word of God.

#7: Most disturbing is that so-called “tradition” blatantly contradicts the Word of God itself. For example, through R.C. tradition Mariology has boarded a rocket ship of creativity, but how can we speak of her as mediatrix when there is one mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ? This is to say nothing of perogatory, praying to saints, etc. etc.

Note: Obviously, my paper presents another way of looking at this entire question, but I will leave that for the paper.

#14: Summarize the principles for dealing with alleged contradictions in the Bible:

Answer: There are several aspects:

#1: Augustine offers good advice, if there is something we do not understand, is either because 1. We are looking at a copiest error; or 2. We are lacking some knowledge. Otherwise:

#2: Do NOT presume the Bible guilty until proven guilty! We never do this. We give the benefit of the doubt for traffic signs, food labels, etc.

#3: We need to understand the historical context: For example, Christ leaving Jericho and healing the blindman and entering Jericho to do the same has a contextual explanation. Jericho is separated into a “downtown” and “heights” section as many modern-day cities. Thus, it is easy to be leaving one part of Jericho as one is entering another part of Jericho.

#4: Word meaning is also important. For Christ to say, “Whoever does not hate his mother and father, etc.” is to realize that he is not contradicting that we ought love all, even our enemies (and esp. our families and other believers), but to understand that “hate” while it might be said to be hyperbole, in Jewish concepts, can mean “love less.”

#5: Partial information is not contradictory information. Thus in going to Judas again, it is true that he was hung and it after some time, he fell and his bowels burst open. Thus, the other account is also true. In addition, were there two angels or one angel at the tomb of Christ? Both, where there is two, there is always one.

#6: Approximations are allowable and two approximations may not be identical, but this is not contradictory.

#7: We need also to understand paradoxical language. A person can be “dead” but still be “alive.” Thus, God kept His word when Adam and Eve ate the fruit, but they died spiritually, and still had physical life.

#8: We need to understand differences in point of view and perspective: The apostles for example record the same event of Christ on the cross, but from different perspectives. A good analogy for this is the reporters who view the accident at an intersection with four corners. They all see the same event, but contribute different details of the same event.

#9: Sometimes seeming contradictions are cleared up through insight into Christology that some people may not possess. If one does not understand that Christ has two natures, a divine and human nature, then they will consider his not knowing the end as a contradiction to His identity as God. But to know His humility according to the human nature clears this up.

#### 14. Critique the esoteric method of interpreting the Bible.

Answer: The new age concept is bankrupt and of the devil. It views that all is God and man is God. That all expressions are expressions of the same truth. Therefore, it is completely relativistic. People can then approach the Bible in terms of reading it for its hidden, underlying meaning. So what you read clearly is not really what is being communicated. This is supposedly justified when Christ tells His disciples that He tells parables so that some will not understand. So, if Christ says in Matthew 11, “Take my yoke upon you,” it is really “Take my yoga upon you...”!!!!

This Gnostic approach to the Scriptures encourages that the clear meaning is not clear at all, but that we must somehow read between the lines. Everything in Scripture is symbolic and we must get underneath the text.

The problem with this method is that again it is totally relativistic, there is no objectivity, there is no certainty.

We can't, however, ignore, that clear teaching of what Christ says. There are specific direct teachings that cannot be taken any other way, esp. when the Lord goes out of His way to give explanations even for those parables mentioned above.

Furthermore, this is what we should ask the New Ager:

“Don't you believe in Christ's interpretation of His own Word?”

1. If they say “no,” then we can ask, then why do you say that He is enlightened?
2. If they say “yes,” then we can ask, then why don’t you listen to His clear method?

Secondly, the New Age approach claims a hiddenness, a secret aspect (what “esoteric” means), but if this is what Christ was trying to accomplish, He was a great failure indeed! But what is more, His teaching completely contradicts this. His teaching is characterized by “light” even as He is the light. He does not hide His teaching, but gives it to all, Jew and Gentile. The Great Commission puts all of this as out in the open as can be. The esoteric method completely contradicts these facts.

Finally, their own system collapses within itself. They say that they share the same core teaching, but the fact is that they don’t. They even contradict themselves. This proves that the individualistic idea is self-refuting to the claim that all is one.

P.S. Now that I’m finished – 4 ½ hours later – I realize that I’ve gone past 6 pages single space, but I feel that the above is what it took to answer these questions. Thanks!

Alfonso Espinosa