

MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS

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Many Infallible Proofs is the title of an excellent book by Dr A T Pierson written over a hundred years ago and which I have used as the basis of this current exposition.

All knowledge is good and desirable in itself if it adds to character and is the truth. Knowledge that confirms our beliefs is necessary knowledge, since it brings about certainty.

There is a condition called blind faith where there is no independent evidence or any real evidence confirmed by neutral sources. For example, if someone is adamant in their belief of the Loch Ness monster and that it exists, can they supply an independent evidence and neutral evidence which proves their belief and that Nessie does exist. If not their belief in Nessie is a matter of blind faith.

Nothing should be accepted as true unless it is firmly grounded on sound and independent evidence.

People can be sceptical, and honest doubt is understandable.

There are people who will condemn Christianity as lies, and yet have no evidence to prove it is to be false, and they reject evidence to prove that Christianity is truth. They refuse to study the evidence and do not want to. They invent all sorts of red herrings, diverting attention from the real issues.

But there are also Christians who do not want to examine the evidence but rely on the verse in Hebrews that states that faith is the evidence of things not seen.

However, a careful study of the evidence makes for intelligent believers. Faith that is not firmly founded upon good evidence does not deserve to be called faith at all. If there is supporting evidence from the 'opposing view' then that must carry weight. If the Romans and Jews put Jesus to death and their records of the time state that He lived, worked miracles, was crucified and that He rose from the dead, then this is independent evidence. And it is not blind faith.

There are abstract evidences namely the evidence of the senses, the testimony of others, the evidence of reason but this is not enough. There is a need for more. We are not to be sponges to absorb what we are told. We must not have blind faith for that could make us bigots. To believe blindly could cause us to believe wrongly.

Intelligent belief makes for firm faith. Intelligent faith makes us stronger.

As to the evidence of Christianity, the principles we use must be impartial and scientific. Scientific here means knowledge and irrefutable evidence. It must be with concentration and attention. We have to focus on each point and not go off on a tangent. We need discrimination to consider things that differ. We must not assume anything. We must not assume that something is fact and something is error. We must not claim hereditary such as 'my parents believe it and so do I.' Belief by proxy is not an intelligent faith.

We must have the right mental and moral attitude. We cannot come to these questions with a hostile mind or preconceived ideas.

Someone said that when he was a boy he heard a preacher talk about hell, fire and brimstone and that put him off and made him aware that Christianity was rubbish. But he has no evidence to disprove Christianity. There will always be people who will refute the Bible and the Person of Christ but then there also people who deny that the Holocaust ever happened.

We must also accept that we should distrust any argument that insults common sense.

It is claimed that the only evidence of Jesus Christ is in the New Testament and that it is therefore biased since it is written by believers and has no independent or neutral evidence.

We must accept evidence from sources other than the Bible itself. As secular independent evidence about Christ exists, and it does, we do not dismiss it or connive to claim that such evidence is forgery.

Of course, there will always be people who, without any substance or evidence, refute Biblical matters. They will make claims that the Church wrote the Bible but there was no church in the days of the Old Testament prophets some of whose writings can be proved to have been written 700 years before Christ.

As we have said there are people who are adamant that the Holocaust never happened. Some people still believe the world is flat. Some people refuse to believe what is truth.

Alexander the Great lived three centuries before Christ (he died in 323 BC) and we can read about his conquests and no one seems to challenge it. Many articles state that he was homosexual and no one seems to challenge this, but accept it as true. Yet why is it that they challenge the details of the life of Christ? Why is He singled out and Alexander is not?

Josephus was born about 37AD, some seven or eight years after the crucifixion of Christ. He was a Jew but was in the service of the Romans. He was never a Christian but he wrote a History of the Jews called the Antiquities of the Jews which confirms the history as in the Old Testament. In his lifetime he must have met many Christians and others who knew Jesus, saw His miracles, were probably present or nearby at His death and saw Him alive after His resurrection. Josephus was a reliable historian and would not have been hoodwinked.

He wrote:

There was a wise man called Jesus, if it is lawful to call Him a man. He performed wonderful deeds (miracles) and was a teacher who won over many of the Jews and Gentiles. He was the Christ. Pilate condemned Him to death on the Cross but Jesus appeared alive after His death, which the prophets had foretold.

Later, Josephus writes about James the brother of Jesus who, with other Christians, were accused of being law breakers.

This is the evidence of a non Christian. It is secular and independent evidence.

Another reliable historian the Roman, Cornelius Tacitus (55AD - 120AD), who also was not a Christian, wrote that Christ, the founder of Christianity, was put to death by Pilate and that some Romans said that Christians were responsible for the fire of Rome years later... but this does not tally with other contemporary secular records which all agree that Christians were gentle, peace-loving people.

Thallus worked in Rome about 52AD and, in his historical writings, he refers to the darkness that covered the earth at the time of the death of Jesus even though it was the time of the Paschal full moon. Thallus was not a Christian either.

Suetonis was another Roman historian. He wrote how the Emperor Claudius expelled Christians from Rome which is also what Acts 18 states.

Pliny the Younger writes that some Christians were forced to bow down to statues of Trajan (Roman

Emperor 98 - 117) and to curse Christ which a genuine Christian would not do. Instead, they sang a hymn to Jesus as the Son of God and repeated their solemn vows and doctrines that they had put away wicked deeds and do not commit fraud, theft, adultery and do not falsify their word or deny a trust.

This ties up with the other evidence that Christians were good living people, gentle and not militant.

This is non Christian and, therefore, independent evidence.

Justin Martyr became a Christian. He refers to the birth of Christ as in the Gospels and how Magi came from Arabia for the purpose of worshipping the baby Jesus but went first to Herod. Justin refers to the crucifixion, lots being cast for Jesus' garments, His disciples forsaking Him and His resurrection.

There is the Didache, writings about Christians which writings are not in the Bible. There are the letters of other early Christians such as Polycarp which are not in the Bible.

There is clear evidence of non Christians testimony, which testimony is committed to a permanent form, that of writing, which confirms the basic facts about Jesus. It cannot therefore be said that it is only the Bible that tells us about Jesus and His life. Not only is this secular evidence but independent evidence and some of it written by the 'opposition' namely the Romans who hated the Jews.

Today, we have stories about Christ which seek to demote and abuse Him. People have said that He married Mary Magadalen and had children with her, that He did not die on the Cross but was drugged or swooned. As experts have said even if the drug /swoon theory were true the Lord could not have survived the crucifixion and would have died of suffocation and loss of blood. All the secular records stated that he was certified dead before being entombed and you can be sure that with the enemies he had the hateful Romans and Jews would have been certain that He was dead. The spear in the side was another confirmation. Common sense must prevail.

The idea that disciples stole the Body but removing the stone is ludicrous. The secular records indicate it was a large and very heavy stone and it was sealed with some sort of cement. A guard was set at the tomb state the Roman records and this involved several soldiers. So the disciples came and used hammers and chisels to remove the seal which would have been along and noisy procedure having disposed of the guards. It is also recorded that any Roman who shirked his duty or abandoned it was subject to severe punishment or death.

This is not just in the New Testament but in the secular records of the time.

There is also a record of the soldiers at the tomb being paid to keep quiet and being moved to other locations in the Roman Empire. This is not in the Bible but in Roman records of the time.

The disciples were terrified for themselves when Jesus was arrested but after the resurrection they were changed men full of confidence and lacking in fear. They were preaching in the open air to the Jews who had put Jesus to death. No doubt Roman soldiers were in attendance as they had to be in large public group gatherings.

It was not just the powerful preaching that led to the conversion of three thousand on the day of Pentecost but the fact that in the crowd there would have been people who knew Jesus and some who saw Him after the resurrection. The explanation of the courage of the disciples is that they had seen Jesus died after the resurrection and therefore knew Jesus conquered death.

It should also be remembered that Jews were in the service of the Romans and would have been at the crucifixion, death and burial of Christ. They would have the 'dirty' and menial jobs. They may have prepared the victims for the crucifixions, supplied the hammers and nail and used them and, as the

soldiers would be there for many hours, supplied them with refreshments and washing facilities. Jews may have taken the victims down from the Cross and, in the case of Jesus, carried Him to His tomb.

We read that after the resurrection Jesus appeared to many including a gathering which included over 500 men. Josphus bears record to such events.

And so, in the crowd on the Day of Pentecost there were witnesses to the death and resurrection of Christ.

These are some of the many infallible proofs endorsed by secular and independent evidence.

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