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# **Contemporary American Approaches to the Study of New Testament**

***An Analytical Study with special reference to Bart D. Ehrman***

**Submitted by: Muhammad Abdullah Khawer Rizwani**

***Reg. No: 690-FU-MSCR-F13***

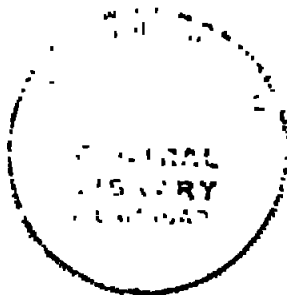
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**Final Approval**

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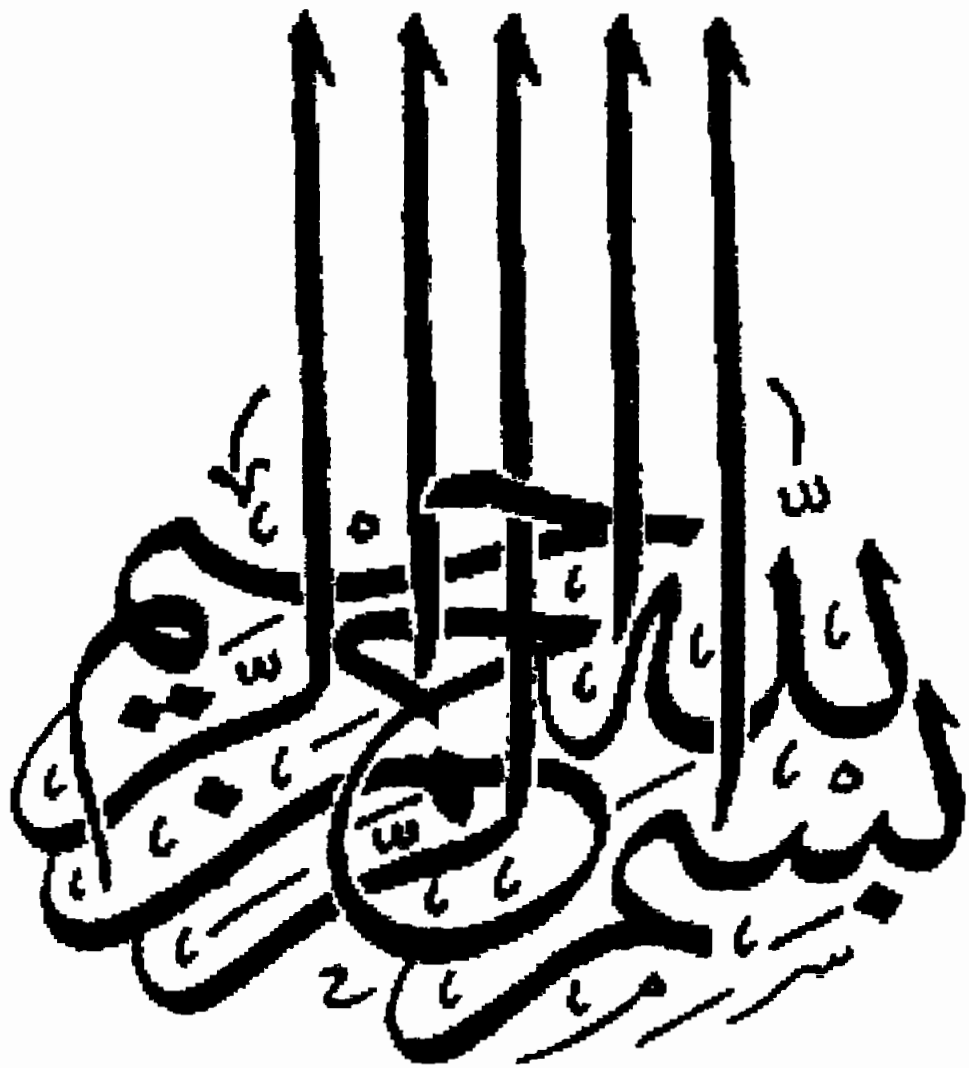
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**IN THE NAME OF ALLAH ALMIGHTY  
WHO IS MOST BENEFICENT AND  
MERCIFUL**

**Allah Almighty says in the Glorious Quran:**

**فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ يَكْتُبُونَ الْكِتَابَ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ ثُمَّ يَقُولُونَ هَذَا مِنْ عِنْدِ اللَّهِ لِيَشْتَرُوا بِهِ  
ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا فَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا كَتَبَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَوَيْلٌ لَهُمْ مِمَّا يَكْسِبُونَ**

**"Then woe to those who write the Book with their own hands, and then say: This is from Allah, to traffic with it for miserable price! Woe to them for what their hands do write, and for the gain they make thereby". (2:79)**

## النهج المعاصرة الأمريكية لدراسة العهد الجديد

### دراسة تحليلية للنهج الاستعماري لإهرمان هيرمان

الدراسة النقدية للعهد الجديد مجال واسع جداً وعظيمة للمسيحيين لأنها تلمس أسس دينهم وكتابهم المقدس. وهذه الدراسة تؤدي إلى إعداد ترجمات مختلفة ومتنافسة في بعض الأحيان كما وقع ذلك في القرن العشرين وهي هامة للمسلمين أيضاً لأنها تزيد معرفة وجهات النظر المعاصرة الغربية حول العهد الجديد وهذه المعرفة سعيين في إعتبار أفضل موقف وقت الحوار والمناقشة مع المسيحيين.

لاحظ الباحثون في القرن العشرين، لا سيما في نصفه الثاني، أن المسيحيين قد أصدروا حوالي مائة ترجمة للعهد الجديد باللغة الإنجليزية وحدها، وأهم يهدفون إلى إنتاج المزيد. ومن أسباب هذه الظاهرة دراسة نقدية للكتاب المقدس. لذلك في أن الدراسات النقدية تتعرض للتحيز في التصور للعهد الجديد من جانب وفي المعتقدات البنيية على النصوص الصغيرة من جانب آخر.

قد شاهد العصر الحاضر في أمريكا عدداً كبيراً من العلماء الذين يعتقدون إما في انتقاد نص العهد الجديد أو في الدفاع عنه. فثبت البعض عدم موثوقية العهد الجديد ويعتبر البعض على أصالته وموثوقيته. ومن العلوم أن المعاهد التعليمية الأمريكية قد نشرت المادة العلمية الضعيفة حول هذين الموقفين من العهد الجديد بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية. هذه المادة العلمية النقدية تشمل الكتب والبحوث العلمية والتأثيرات حول الموضوع المعاصر لهذا البحث.

الأستاذ الدكتور بارت د. إهرمان أحد العلماء البارزين الذين كانوا مسيحيين إنجيليين ولكن دراساتهم النقدية للعهد الجديد حجت عليهم أن يتركوا ديانتهم المسيحية، ثم اكتشفوا أبسلة أدلة جديدة موضوعية أن العهد الجديد كتاب محرف وليس في شكل أصلي، وبالتالي أن المعتقدات البنيية على نصوص العهد الجديد القابلة للتحيز المستمر ليست معتقدات علمية حقيقية قوية. هذا الكشف قادهم إلى مناهضة اللاأدوية.

أما هذا البحث فيركز على الانتقادات الموجهة للعهد الجديد خلال الدراسات النقدية للتأيد المعاصر بارت د. إهرمان وأعماله. ومن حدود هذا البحث هو تركيزه على العهد الجديد فقط لا الكتاب المقدس كله وكذلك يدرس هذا البحث الدراسات النقدية حول معتقدات المسيحيين على أساس العهد الجديد فقط.

ومن الأسئلة الأساسية لهذا البحث كما يلي:

1. ما مناهج العلماء الأمريكيين المعاصرين في الدراسات النقدية للعهد الجديد؟
2. ما مكانة الأساطير بارت وأهرمان بين العلماء الأمريكيين المعاصرين الذين يدرسون العهد الجديد؟
3. ما منهج الأساطير بارت وأهرمان في دراساته النقدية للمعتقدات الأخلاقية من العهد الجديد؟
4. ما هو تأثير منهج الأساطير بارت وأهرمان لدراسة العهد الجديد على المسيحيين المعاصرين؟
5. كيف يتطوع المسلمون بمنهج الأساطير بارت وأهرمان؟

يصيب تركيزي في هذا البحث على الجوانب التالية:

- في الفصل الأول، أودع بوضع رسم تاريخي للمناهج الأمريكية المعاصرة للعهد الجديد. ينقسم هذا الفصل إلى خمسة أجزاء:
- الجزء الأول: رسم تاريخي لهداية الدراسة النقدية للعهد الجديد.
- الجزء الثاني: العهد الجديد في العالم الحديث.
- الجزء الثالث: العهد الجديد في عصر ما بعد العصر الحديث.
- الجزء الرابع: الشخصيات البارزة في الجادلات وعلوم الدفاع من العهد الجديد في القرن العشرين.
- الجزء الخامس: يشرح حياة وأعمال الدكتور بارت وأهرمان ومكان الدكتور بارت وأهرمان بين علماء أمريكا المعاصرين.
- الفصل الثاني يدور حول منهج الدكتور بارت وأهرمان في عقائد وعلوم اللاهوت من العهد الجديد. يتكون هذا الفصل مجزئين:
- الجزء الأول: منهج الدكتور بارت وأهرمان إلى عقائد العهد الجديد.
- الجزء الثاني: منهج الدكتور بارت وأهرمان إلى علم اللاهوت من العهد الجديد.

الفصل الثالث هو الفصل الأخير من هذا البحث ويضمن تحليل منهج الدكتور بارت دأهرمان والاستنتاج.

يوضح التحليل العميق لما يرمع دراسة نقدية للكتاب المقدس أن الخطوة الأولى نحو الدراسة النقدية للكتاب المقدس بشكل عام والعهد الجديد على وجه الخصوص كانت الاعتماد على أسلوب استعماري لدراسة الكتاب المقدس. فتم إضافة العديد من الأشياء الجديدة إلى النص الأصلي في اسم معنى استعماري في نهاية المطاف. في وقت لاحق أدرك الناس أن المصادر القديمة التي كانت أصلية قد تغيرت من استعمال الاستعمارات مع مرور الوقت. لذلك بدأ الناس في استكشاف المصادر الأصلية من أجل التأكد من صحة الإضافات الاستعمارية.

وبالتالي أدى ذلك إلى حركة "Sola Scriptura" التي أكدت على أهمية النص الأصلي فقط. عندما تحول الناس إلى النصوص الأصلية فقط، وجدوا صعوبة في فهمها دون مساعدة من الترجمات الحديثة. لذلك بدأوا في تسهيل الأمر على القراء. كان هذا هو أساس "النهج الموجه للقارئ" الذي جلب الإجماع لترجمة وتفسير العهد الجديد بطريقة أكثر سهولة في القراءة وسهلة الفهم للقراء. استمر هذا النهج حتى اليوم وظهت مجموعة كبيرة من إصدارات العهد الجديد كنتيجة "لنهج الموجه للقارئ".

في هذا السياق، قمت بتحليل منهج الدكتور بارت دأهرمان في ضوء الترجمات الحديثة وكذلك التقاليد الإسلامية ليتألف هذا البحث تكملة شاملة.

وأسأل الله تعالى أن يجعل هذا البحث نافعاً للجميع المسلمين.



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

**First and foremost I would like to show my appraisal to Allah Almighty because lacking his approvals I would not have had the endurance and skill to start such a duty and now as my research has stretch to its conclusion I would like to recognize the outer indulgence and kindness. After Almighty Allah, may the greatest blessings of Allah be upon his Prophet Muhammad (Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon him) the most prefect and exalted, a source of guidance for humanity forever.**

**My deep and sincere gratitude to my research supervisor Mr. Khursheed Ahmed as without his motivation, this research and thesis could not have reached its cessation. He was the true stimulus behind me and gave me the moral and academic strength to pursue this assignment with perception and keen judgment to accomplish my project in time.**

**I am extremely grateful to my parents for their love, prayers and sacrifices for preparing me for my future. Their silent prayers for me and their encouragement at every step have no doubt been valuable assets of my life. Also I express my deepest thanks to my brother Salik Khawer for providing me with unfailing support throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis.**

**I wholeheartedly present my sincere appreciations to my Director Captain Dr. Shafiq Ur Rehman PN who spared me time to time from official commitments to complete and submit my thesis in time.**

**And lastly, I thank my family for all their support and good wishes and all those who have supported me to complete the research work directly or indirectly.**

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## **Introduction**

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in its second half, Christians have produced over a hundred translations of the New Testament in English language alone and they are aiming to produce more. Why is this activity going on so frequently since compilation of the Bible and why do Christians not agree on one version?

The reason behind this is critical study of the Bible which leads to the production of an updated New Testament Greek text and its improved translation. Now a days in America, a large number of scholars are engaged either in criticizing the New Testament or defending this criticism. Some of them have tendency to prove unreliability of the New Testament while others are trying to maintain its authenticity and reliability.

Most of the scholars of American seminaries are in favor that New Testament is in its original form and they have written bundle of books and scholarly articles on that topic while some American university scholars are of the opinion that New Testament is totally corrupted and is not reliable now. One of these scholars is Bart D. Ehrman who was an evangelical Christian before starting his critical study of the New Testament. But when he started critical study, he came to know that New Testament is interpolated and not in genuine form. His criticism led him to agnosticism and now he is not a Christian. He left his faith and wrote many books about textual and theological complications of the whole Bible generally and the New Testament particularly.

The subject of textual criticism is very significant and sensitive for Christians since their religion bases on it and it is also significant for Muslims because by knowing current views of western scholarship about the New Testament, they will be in better position for dialogue and debate.

My focus in this research is on the criticism of contemporary New Testament critic Bart D. Ehrman to analyze and evaluate his approach about different aspects of New Testament Theology.

## **Importance of the topic**

Importance of this topic can be known through the sensitivity of this issue and contemporary work on it. Most of the American universities and Christian seminaries have many biblical scholars who are engaged either in New Testament criticism or defending this criticism.

The contemporary critical approaches to the theology of New Testament in America not only leave a deep and vast impact on religious thoughts and social views but also on interfaith relations as well all over the world.

## **Reasons to select the topic**

- I have selected this topic because of my personal interest in biblical criticism and since no work has been done yet about this aspect. So it is something new which will enhance my knowledge as well as benefit the readers.
- Furthermore, I want to learn useful lessons from the contemporary approaches to the study of the New Testament to be well aware of the field.
- Another, I want to continue the line of research and study of the New Testament started by Muslim scholars.
- Moreover, such studies are required for a successful and meaningful dialogue between Muslims and Christians.

Muslims should know current views of western scholars about New Testament which lead to evidences for interpolation in the Bible. As the Noble Qur'an says: "They change words from places" (5:13). By getting this type of knowledge, we will be in better position to understand deeply such type of Qur'anic messages.

## **Limits of research**

1. This research focuses on American approaches in general and on the work of Bart D. Ehrman in particular.

2. This study aims to conduct the research on the topic in the contemporary age.
3. Another limit of this research is its focus on New Testament and not the whole Bible.
4. Moreover, it pays attention to the theological studies of the New Testament.

### **Methodology**

In this research, I will explore the approach of Bart D. Ehrman towards the Doctrines and Theology of New Testament and therefore I will adopt analytical as well as critical method to evaluate various Biblical Doctrines and Theology approached by him in the light of Modern versions. To analyze his approach, the New Testament version being used in this research is New International Version (NIV).

### **Objectives**

Muslims believe in interpolation of the Bible on the basis of information given by the Qur'an as it says: "So, woe to those who write the Book with their hands and then say this is from Allah, so that they may gain thereby a trifling price. Then, woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for what they earn" (2:79). This is very much true and strong evidence but applicable on Muslims only. The objective of this research is to prove this point by providing evidences from western scholarship to strengthen the claim of Muslims which will ultimately prove the authenticity and resilient reliability of the Qur'an to the whole world.

### **Literature review**

In 20<sup>th</sup> century, many apologetic and polemic scholars of America have written on the subject addressed by Bart D. Ehrman. Some of the major scholars include Richard G. Swinburne, Daniel Baird Wallace, Darrell L. Bock, Craig Alan Evans, Michael R. Licona, James Robert White, Bruce M Metzger and others. They have addressed different aspects of Bart D. Ehrman's work.

Daniel Baird Wallace who is president of the Evangelical Theological Society and professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary is very actively involved in countering criticism on reliability of New Testament and to achieve that purpose he has instituted the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts

which focuses on digitizing all known Greek manuscripts of New Testament. He actively contributes to the Bart D. Ehrman Project<sup>1</sup>. His major work is on reliability of the New Testament manuscripts and textual criticism.<sup>2</sup> Wallace critiqued Ehrman's book "Misquoting Jesus: The Story of Who Changed the Bible and Why" for misrepresenting commonly held views of textual criticism, especially his view about the "orthodox corruption of Scripture". He has debated with Bart D. Ehrman on the topic "is the original New Testament lost" and tried to prove that discrepancies found in New Testament are based on the context in which the text was produced and we need to reconcile the discrepancies in the light of first century context. So his major concern is to prove the reliability of New Testament in contrary to view point of Bart D. Ehrman.

Another American scholar who has keen interest in the subject is Michael R. Licona. He works as Associate Professor at Houston Baptist University. Licona is specialized in the analysis of the Resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him). His book "The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach" has been recommended by many famous Biblical scholars and historians<sup>3</sup>. Licona conducted his doctoral research on the particular issue of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) resurrection. In doing so, he has applied the historical approach to examine this issue. He concludes that almost all of the scholars who are conducting their researches on the resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him) are either philosophers or biblical scholars, but none of them is aware of philosophy of history and that is the point in which they lack.<sup>4</sup>

He has extensively worked on the issue of resurrection and debated with many polemic scholars including Bart D. Ehrman. During a debate with Bart D. Ehrman, he confessed that there are many differences in resurrection accounts found in Gospels but these occur due to application of ancient biographical rules which were definitely different

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<sup>1</sup>It is a website which critically analyses the works of Bart D. Ehrman.

<sup>2</sup>[www.danielbwallace.com](http://www.danielbwallace.com) Accessed October 11, 2017.

<sup>3</sup><http://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/review> Accessed October 10, 2017.

<sup>4</sup>[https://www.academia.edu/people/search/Michael\\_Licona](https://www.academia.edu/people/search/Michael_Licona) Accessed October 22, 2017.

from today's procedures. He emphasized on the reconciliation of these contradictory accounts by analysing discrepancies keeping in view the ancient biographical rules.

Another prominent figure of American apologetic world of 20<sup>th</sup> century is Craig Alan Evans. He is an expert on early Christianity and development of Christian scripture. Presently he is professor at Houston Baptist University and teaches Christian Origins. His analysis on the origins of Christianity has wide impact on contemporary scholarship. He debated several times with Bart D. Ehrman on the reliability of New Testament and portrayal of Jesus (peace be upon him) in New Testament.<sup>5</sup> His research focuses on the reliability of New Testament as well as the portrayal of Jesus in Gospels.

Another apologetic scholar who works on the reliability of New Testament is James Robert White. He is influential figure of American community who is actively involved in defence of inerrancy of the Bible and for that purpose he founded Alpha and Omega Ministries. The core job of this organization is to promote evangelical apologetics in order to counter the arguments raised by polemic scholars like Bart D. Ehrman and others. He has written around 20 books on this issue and debated with many polemic scholars including Bart D. Ehrman on the topic "does the Bible misquote Jesus (peace be upon him)".

Another active apologetic scholar is Richard G. Swinburne who is prominent as one of the leading Christian apologists. He is the prominent scholar of philosophy of 20<sup>th</sup> century. He served at University of Oxford as professor of philosophy for many years. His major area of interest is Theodicy and the existence of God. He has debated with Bart D. Ehrman on the existence of evil and produced various works on the subject. He has presented in his books, many philosophical arguments for the existence of God, but besides that he urges that existence of God is somehow related to metaphysics as well<sup>6</sup>. While Swinburne presents many arguments to advance the belief that God exists, he argues that God is a being whose existence is not logically necessary, but

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<sup>5</sup>[www.craigaeans.com](http://www.craigaeans.com) Accessed October 14, 2017.

<sup>6</sup><http://www.giffordlectures.org/lecturers/richard-granville-swinburne> Accessed November 15, 2017.



metaphysically necessary in a way he defines in his work "The Christian God". His books are primarily very technical works of academic philosophy, but he has written at the popular level as well.

Another scholar working on the subject is Dinesh Joseph D'Souza who is an Indian born American political commentator, author, filmmaker and apologist. D'Souza has debated against prominent atheists and critics of Christianity including Bart D. Ehrman on religious and moral issues. Many of his works discuss Christian apologetics and are critical of New Atheism. His Christian apologetic books "What is So Great about Christianity" and "Life after Death: The Evidence" were both on The New York Times Best Seller list. He identifies himself as a nondenominational Christian.

Another scholar who is engaged in historical analysis of existence of Jesus (peace be upon him) is Robert McNair Price. He is an American theologian and professor of biblical criticism at the Center for Inquiry Institute. He argues against the existence of a historical Jesus (peace be upon him) and presents mythical view point. Price questioned the historicity of Jesus in a series of books including "Deconstructing Jesus", "The Incredible Shrinking Son of Man", "Jesus Is Dead", "The Christ Myth Theory and Its Problems" as well as "Jesus at the Vanishing Point, a contribution to The Historical Jesus: Five Views". In 2016, he debated Bart D. Ehrman on the historicity of Jesus and tried to prove his stance. Bart D. Ehrman completely rejected his view point presented in the book "Jesus at the Vanishing Point" in which Price gives three key points for the traditional Christ myth theory. Bart D. Ehrman explored complete myth theory in his book "Did Jesus exist" and proved the existence of Jesus (peace be upon him) through historical evidences.

In this research, Bart D. Ehrman's work will be divided into two parts, the first part is regarding doctrines and the second one is about Theology approached by him. Moreover, both parts will be analyzed in the light of Modern versions of New Testament and this is new thing which has not been done yet. Furthermore, the major

doctrines and theology will be evaluated keeping in view the principles given by The Glorious Quran and Hadith.

### **Research questions**

This research aims to explore the answers of the following questions:

1. What are the famous approaches of American scholars to the New Testament during the contemporary age?
2. Where does Bart D. Ehrman stand in the context of general New Testament studies?
3. How has Bart D. Ehrman approached to the Doctrines and Theology of the New Testament?
4. What is the influence of Bart D. Ehrman's approach to the New Testament on contemporary American scholarship?
5. How can Muslims benefit from Bart D. Ehrman's approach to the New Testament?

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **HISTORICAL SKETCH OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN APPROACHES TO THE NEW TESTAMENT**

This chapter discusses historical background of American approaches to the New Testament in modern and postmodern era. Modern era (1750-1945) covers mostly first half of 20<sup>th</sup> century whereas postmodern time consists of second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century till today. Before starting the historical background, it seems appropriate to elaborate the composition of New Testament in order to have better understanding of chapter.

#### **New Testament Canon**

The New Testament contains Christian religious teachings and beliefs. It only covers several decades in contrast to Old Testament which encompasses several centuries of history. The New Testament is essentially not written by one person, rather it is a combination of twenty-seven books written by people from various places and times. We cannot say that New Testament is an anthology because for anthology there must be some anthologist, whereas we don't know any single person in history as anthologist of the Bible<sup>7</sup>.

These twenty-seven books are centered on Jesus Christ (peace be upon him) and describe his life and teachings. Every book has its own writer, background, theme and purpose. The books of New Testament are usually divided into four major categories: The Gospels, The Acts of Apostles, The Epistles and The Book of Revelation.

#### **The Gospels**

The origin of word "gospel" is Old English word "god-spell" which means "good news" and is a literal translation of Greek word "εὐαγγέλιον" (euangelion) (eu "good" and

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<sup>7</sup>Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Book and The Parchments*, (Old Tappan: Revell, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed, 1963), p. 88.

angellion "message")<sup>8</sup>. Christians considered the Gospel "good news" of redemption through the resurrection accounts of Jesus (Peace be upon him) portrayed in these books.

The first three gospels Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the synoptic gospels which means "at one look" gospels. The reason behind this name is that all of three present the same version of historical events narrated by each differing only in some details according to the message given by text and the interests of the author. John is not included in synoptic Gospels because it usually portrays a very different and distinct view of historical happenings. All of the synoptic Gospels present the story about Jesus (Peace be upon him), his early life and teachings whereas Gospel of John emphasizes on the mystery and identity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) as the Son of God instead of recording historical events about Jesus's (Peace be upon him) life.

### **The Book of Acts**

The fifth book in the New Testament is Acts of the Apostles (early Christian leaders). It gives us the history about the growth of the Christian community and the expansion of its message to the whole Roman Empire.

It seems that author intended to make it the second part of a single book beginning with Luke because author of Luke wrote both books consecutively but it could not get the status of canonical Gospel.

While Luke is a Gospel about Jesus (Peace be upon him) which describes the life of Jesus (Peace be upon him), Acts describes the history of the first church in chronological order.

### **The Epistles**

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<sup>8</sup> [www.oxforddictionaries.com](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com) Accessed May 10, 2016.

The twenty-one books subsequent to Acts are epistles or letters. These are counted as the books which were written by the leaders of various churches to other churches situated in numerous parts of the neighboring towns and cities. The first fourteen of these letters are known as the "Epistles of Paul" and are supposed to be written by Paul to correspond with the earliest churches of the first and second centuries.

The next seven letters succeeding the Epistles of Paul are named the Catholic Epistles, because they were addressed not to the particular church communities, rather to the Christians as a whole.

### **The Book of Revelation**

The Book of Revelation is the final and last book of the New Testament. It explains the vision of a church community leader who lived under the oppression of Roman Empire by giving the glimpse of glory that awaits the Christians in the age to come for salvation.<sup>9</sup>

After this brief introduction of New Testament, I will start part one of first chapter. The first chapter has been divided into five parts since it covers first two questions of my research:

1. Emergence of the critical study of the New Testament.
2. New Testament in Modern world.
3. New Testament of Post Modern Era.
4. Major Polemic and Apologetic scholars of 20<sup>th</sup> century.
5. Introduction of Bart D. Ehrman.

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<sup>9</sup>David Ewert, *A General Introduction to The Bible: From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations*, (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1983), pp. 24-28.

## **Part I**

### **Emergence of the Critical Study of the New Testament**

There are different opinions about accuracy and inerrancy of New Testament. Large number of Scholars considers it as undeniably accurate scripture and bases their belief and practices on it. Some others are of the opinion that New Testament is not in its original condition and therefore they claim that New Testament is interpolated and modified. The most important question which arises here is that when was the critical study of Bible started, why and how it started?

#### **1. A. 1. Emergence of Critical Approach**

The beginning of Modern critical study of New Testament is traced back to very ancient times. Shortly before the year 200 CE, Origen (184-253 CE) was a Christian theologian who adopted an approach which led to critical study later on. He was prominent writer of his time and wrote in several fields of theology including textual criticism, spirituality and preaching. The approach adopted and introduced by him was the emergent point for all the critical study developed in modern times.<sup>10</sup>

He was never canonized as a saint unlike many church fathers, because various of his teachings contradicted the teachings endorsed to the apostles, especially the Apostles Paul and John. He taught that God the Son is subordinate to God the Father which was rejected by Christian orthodoxy. Origen first time used an allegorical method of interpretation. Allegorical method may be defined as method which assumes that Bible has numerous levels of meaning and emphasizes to seek the spiritual sense as opposed to the literal sense.<sup>11</sup> Although Origen remained controversial figure in Christian history but he had great influence on major Christian theologians of his time. Origen believed

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<sup>10</sup>Bruce M. Metzger (ed.), *The Text of The Fourth Gospel in The Writings of Origen*, (Atlanta Georgia: Scholars Press, 1992), Vol 1, pp. 2-4.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, p. 7.

that Bible passages may be interpreted in two different ways, the literal sense and the allegorical (spiritual) sense. This concept was later broadened into 'threefold sense' belief which assumes that passages in the Bible have three different meanings, the literal, the moral and the allegorical meaning.<sup>12</sup>

Origen recommends in his Treatise on "First Principles" that the Old and New Testaments are to be allegorically understood at different levels because most of the events narrated in the Bible do not make any sense if interpreted literally. To know the actual meaning of these passages, the only way is to find out the spiritual (allegorical) sense out of these passages. Origen did not deny the validity of literal meaning of text; instead he emphasized that when the literal explanation of the text results in any contradiction or nonsense, then one has to find out the deeper spiritual meaning beneath literal sense.<sup>13</sup>

As the time passed, allegorical method was developed to facilitate a Christian reading of the Old Testament. The use of allegorical interpretation began as a Christian way for studying the variances between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Medieval Christian scholars saw the Old Testament as an allegory of the New Testament events, such as the parable of Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) and the whale, which represents Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death through crucifixion and resurrection (as per Christian belief contrary to Islamic stand point). The Book of Jonah in the Old Testament tells us that the prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) spent three days in tummy of a whale. This was taken by medieval Christian scholars as an allegory of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death and after his death being in the tomb for three days as Prophet Jonah (peace be upon him) remained in tummy of a whale for three days and then he (Jesus Peace be upon him) was raised from the dead. So Allegorical interpretations facilitated Christian readers to find out Christian themes in the Old

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<sup>12</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *Studies in the Textual Criticism of The New Testament*, (Boston: Brill Leiden Press, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>13</sup>Bruce M. Metzger (ed.), *The Text of The Fourth Gospel in The Writings of Origen*, pp. 6-7.

Testament. This led to addition of various new interpretations of New Testament text by applying allegorical method which were later criticized by the Biblical scholars.

### **1. A. 2. The Renaissance**

Renaissance is a period from the 14th to the 17th century. It is considered as the cultural bridge between the Middle Ages and Modern times.

This period was a rebirth of learning. The motto of Renaissance period was "*ad fontes*" which means "back to the sources". The Renaissance scholars started looking to original sources like Hebrew and Greek foundations. The discovery of ancient manuscripts paved way to the critical study and development of textual criticism.<sup>14</sup>

### **1. A. 3. The Reformation**

Influenced by the Renaissance, Martin Luther who was the founder of Protestantism emphasized on the study of scriptures in the original languages to avoid any kind of misinterpretation. The reformers rejected allegorical method because this could be used to support church traditions which were not found in a clear reading of Scripture. The Reformers established the foundation of their faith on the authority based on scripture alone and therefore the motto of Reformation period was "*Sola Scriptura*" which means scripture alone. This slogan (scripture alone) claimed that text of the Bible could be understood by reading itself without the help of allegorical interpretations provided by Catholic Church. Luther therefore attacked and rejected Catholic allegories. Later on Protestants completely shattered the authority of Church<sup>15</sup> by claiming that Catholic Church modified the text of the Bible by using allegorical method to make the Bible say whatever it desired and resultantly inserted many of its favorite doctrines in it.

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<sup>14</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *Studies in the Textual Criticism of The New Testament*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid. pp. 3-4.



In 1517, Martin Luther wrote The Ninety-Five Theses which were the foundation of reformation movement. Luther started his criticism by evaluation of selling of indulgences and concluded that no authority has been given to Pope over purgatory in the Bible and that the Catholic dogma of merits of the saints (belief that good works done by Saints can benefit other people) had no foundation in the gospel.<sup>16</sup>

Luther analyzed that many of catholic doctrines have been interpolated in Bible on the basis of Allegorical interpretations and thus rejected several teachings of the Catholic Church. He was strongly against the point that autonomy from God's punishment due to sin could be purchased with money. This was the point from which religious war started and criticism on New Testament and Catholic Church began.

Catholics responded at the Council of Trent which was conducted for twenty-five sessions between 13 December 1545 and 4 December 1563 that the authority to interpret the Bible is only given to the Church and no one else is allowed to interpret it by virtue of divine instructions.<sup>17</sup>

Religious wars made people dissatisfied with authoritarian church and consequently Protestants initiated critical studies of Bible which ultimately led to re-evaluation of all earliest literature.

#### **1. A. 4. The Enlightenment**

Moving towards the modern times, the findings of Galileo and Copernicus that science contradict church teachings led to the sovereignty of science. The philosophy of the Enlightenment emphasized personal responsibility and autonomy. The enlightenment

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<sup>16</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 1968), p. 109.

<sup>17</sup>Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, p 87

philosophers did not reject religion completely but they sought for a religion which is compatible with reason.<sup>18</sup>

So Reformation and Enlightenment both contributed towards the beginning of critical study of Bible. Martin Luther had liberated the authority of Biblical Interpretation from the control of the church hierarchy whereas the Enlightenment freed the study of the Bible from theology. Ultimately the Bible was studied as any other book using the same critical skepticism and the same methods that were applied to other ancient sources.

The General Social Survey data examines different viewpoints on science and religion in the America. Analysis reveals that there are three approaches about science, religiosity, and preferences for certain religious explanations of the world. 43 percent of Americans prefer religion compared to science (against critical study of Bible); 36 percent holds the opposite view (advocates of critical study of Bible). A third perspective (21 percent) sympathetically considers both science and religion (skeptical/agnostic approach).<sup>19</sup>

The next part will elaborate the approaches adopted by New Testament scholars in Modern times.

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<sup>18</sup>Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *Tradition: Old and New*, (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1970), p 51.

<sup>19</sup>[www.jstor.org/action/general](http://www.jstor.org/action/general) Accessed June 19, 2016.

## **Part II**

### **New Testament in Modern World**

When scholars realized that manuscripts of New Testament (NT) disagree on numerous places, textual criticism began. The major concern for all Bible critics was to establish the most trustworthy text of NT. As the variety in NT manuscripts and versions emerged, the differences and variances increased and scholars tried to recover the oldest papyri manuscripts in order to find the original form<sup>20</sup>.

John William Wenham<sup>21</sup> summarizes the history of textual criticism as follows:

It is roughly true to say that in 15<sup>th</sup> century we had no Greek text in use, in 17<sup>th</sup> century we had late Medieval Greek text, in 19<sup>th</sup> century, a good 4<sup>th</sup> century Greek text was established and now we are looking forward for early 3<sup>rd</sup> century Greek text<sup>22</sup>.

This statement shows that as critical textual studies increased, scholars moved forward in the search of early Greek manuscripts to recover the original text.

All of these discoveries and study aims to strengthen the authenticity of Christian's conviction that whatever they are reading is the original word of God. As a rough idea, between 1611 and 1881 at least seventy private English versions of NT were published<sup>23</sup>. The most widely used version of the 17<sup>th</sup> century is King James Version (KJV) which was published in 1611 and since then most commonly used version in America. After this, many other versions emerged and revisions of these versions came into existence. At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, a major revision of KJV was undertaken

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<sup>20</sup>Ewert, *A General Introduction to The Bible*, p. 145.

<sup>21</sup>John William Wenham (1913-1996) was famous Anglican Biblical scholar. He devoted his whole life to preach and spread Bible through his academic expertise. During World War II, he served as Royal Air Force chaplain. He is among the most influential apologetic scholars of postmodern times

<sup>22</sup>John William Wenham, *Christ and the Bible*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1973), p. 174.

<sup>23</sup>Geddes Macgregor, *The Bible in the Making*, (New York: Lippincott, 1959), p. 316.

which gave readers taste of revised version<sup>24</sup>. This revised work is known as English Revised Version (ERV)<sup>25</sup>. The version changed its printing style in order to make it easy for reading. ERV reformed the printing of every verse as separate paragraph and maintained a new practice with numbers to all verses in same paragraph.

The English revisers of ERV modernized the language of KJV by using following archaic words:

They changed the word "Lord" with "Jehovah", "spirit" with "ghost" and "covenant" with the word of "testament".

The English revisers of ERV were more focused on these archaic expressions than their counterpart Americans. They put almost three hundred suggestions of American revisers in the appendix of the revised version on the basis of difference of opinion.

The American revisers continuously progressed after the publication of ERV in 1885 till the English copyright left. After that they revised ERV according to their concerns which they could not do in ERV. They were inclined to eliminate archaic words and phrases inserted by English revisers. They adopted American usage in that version. In August 1901, this revised edition of ERV was published known as American Standard Version.

This version was more comprehensible to readers due to its readable style than the English version and therefore it became much more popular in America than ERV in England.

At the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the emergence of new versions and attempts to reconstruct the original text which involved discovery of papyri, scholars realized that New Testament was written in daily life speech to communicate God's message to people and was not the masterpiece of poetry. Resultantly scholars started translating

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<sup>24</sup>Frederic Kenyon, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), p. 310.

<sup>25</sup>Ewert, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 194.

original Greek text into daily life English translations. This brought the changing trend in NT translations.

One of the pioneer versions in this trend was Twentieth century New Testament. The translators of this version spent fourteen years in the translation of NT in speech and daily life language. Their identity was unknown until 1933 when the records of group of translators were submitted to John Rylands library in Manchester<sup>26</sup>. Some of translators were ministers, some others were laymen but no one was linguistic expert who knew the translation rules. However they consulted linguistic experts on number of places. Their major concern was to make NT easy and understandable to youth and new generation.

The committee of translators was divided into five groups. Each group was assigned a specific portion of NT. Among the groups, each person's translation was disseminated to all group members for examination. One member from each group was elected for revision committee who prepared the final draft of the version. Before printing of that version, the committee went over the entire translation to check the English expressions. They worked on the translation at their homes and collaborated the work by mail. The final edition of this translation was published in 1904 in London and New York. In the preface of this version, the purpose of this translation was stated as "to enable English men to read the most important part of the Bible in the form of their own language which they themselves use".<sup>27</sup>

This Twentieth Century New Testament was pioneer in the movement to translate the New Testament in daily life speech language.

Succeeding part of this chapter will analyze the evolution of New Testament in Post Modern period.

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<sup>26</sup>Sakae Kubo, Walter Specht, *So Many Versions? Twentieth Century English Versions of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids: The Zondervan Corporation, 1975), p. 23.

<sup>27</sup>John Reumann, *The Romance of Bible Scripts and Scholars*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1965), p. 181.

### **Part III**

## **New Testament of the Postmodern Era**

As the trend of translating NT in daily life language started, many new versions of NT emerged and every new translator tried to make his version more reader oriented and thus postmodern time brought reader oriented approach in NT scholarship.

A committee consisting twelve scholars published "The Amplified Bible" in 1965 on the behalf of Lockman Foundation in California. This version was partly translation and partly commentary.<sup>28</sup>

William Barclay<sup>29</sup> published his NT version in two volumes. The volume 1 Gospels and the Acts of Apostles in 1968 and volume 2 the letters and Revelation in 1969. He aimed to make NT coherent to all the people who are not scholars. He wanted to provide translation of NT that did not require commentary to elaborate it. This version was the attempt to make NT speak for itself<sup>30</sup>.

Many other versions were produced in postmodern time but with the publication of Revised Standard Version all efforts obscured.

### **1. C. 1. The Emergence of Revised Standard Version**

Before publication of Revised Standard Version (RSV), two major efforts were made to revise the KJV of 1611. One was ERV of 1881 and other was ASV of 1901 as I have mentioned earlier. Both of the versions aimed to preserve the language of KJV in the light of modern speech versions that were published in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>28</sup>J. P. Lewis, *The English Bible: From KJV to NIV*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1981), p. 330.

<sup>29</sup>William Barclay (1907-1978) was a Scottish Professor of Biblical Criticism and Divinity at the University of Glasgow. He served as minister at Trinity Church Renfrew from 1933 to 1946. Later on he became lecturer of New Testament at University of Glasgow in 1947 and promoted to professor in 1963. He dedicated his life to make biblical scholarship available to the average reader.

<sup>30</sup>Ewert, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 214.

In order to protect ASV from unauthorized modifications, it was copyrighted. The copyright was held by Thomas Nelson<sup>31</sup> and Sons publishers. In 1928 this copyright was transferred to International Council of Religious Education. In that Council forty major denominations of America and Canada represented. The Council made a committee of scholars as custodians of the ASV text.

In 1937, the committee presented a recommendation for the revision of ASV text to express the meaning of NT in simple English designed for private and public use with preservation to the language of KJV. The recommendation was accepted by the Council.<sup>32</sup>

The Council appointed 32 scholars to revise ASV text. In addition to the committee of 32 scholars, an advisory board consisting 50 representatives from all major denominations was also made. Among the denominations represented were Evangelicals, Lutherans, Presbyterians, American Baptists, Methodists and many others.

The committee was assigned specific sections of NT and OT. Scholars did their work individually and after completion of individual work, they gathered and carefully went through the private revisions. The NT Revised Standard Version was published in 1946 and the whole Bible in 1952.

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<sup>31</sup>Thomas Nelson was born in Hampton, Virginia on 11 August 1860. His parents were slaves. After the civil war his father became soldier. Nelson's mother taught him to read which was crime during slavery. Nelson was the first African American who received Ph.D. in philosophy in the United States. He graduated from Mount Hermon Institute in June 1889. He then continued at Yale Divinity School, where he was ordained as minister at Congregational Church on Dixwell Avenue in New Haven. He was awarded Ph.D. in Philosophy from Yale in 1903. He conducted his Ph.D. research on the topic "The Ethical Significance of the Connection between mind and body". He died from an accidental gas poisoning on 22 February 1941.

<sup>32</sup>Ewert, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 216.

The major purpose for the Revised Standard Version was the modernization of English language to make it easy for everyone. Resultantly "saith" was replaced with "says" and "sendeth" was changed with "sends".<sup>33</sup>

In rendering the name of "Yahwah", the RSV changed the practice of using word "Jehovah" as ASV had, and mentioned word "Lord" as it was the practice of KJV.

Moreover RSV changed the practice of translating Greek words by the same English words, Instead it adopted the practice of using variety of synonyms.

Variety of rendering was adopted because same word carries different meanings in different contexts. Sometimes, it becomes necessary to change the word on different context in order to give exact meaning.

For example the Greek word "psychikos" has been translated in different words in order to give proper meaning. On one place, it has been translated as "unspiritual", on another place as "physical" and on another place as "worldly".<sup>34</sup> The revisers of RSV did not follow any particular manuscript family in NT; Instead they randomly evaluated each variant manuscript on its own merits.

RSV has not only become the most commonly used version in America in postmodern times, rather it has also become very famous in England. Number of commentaries appeared in postmodern time are based on RSV. Robert H. Mounce<sup>35</sup> comments on RSV as "the best translation in the English language for general use"<sup>36</sup>

Till mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century, Revised Standard Version was the most widely used version of NT. Many other English versions were also competing till mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The 1970

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<sup>33</sup>Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *History of the Bible in English*, p. 177.

<sup>34</sup>Ewert, *A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 218.

<sup>35</sup>Robert H. Mounce was born on 30 December 1921. He is an American New Testament scholar. He obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Aberdeen. He is president emeritus of Whitworth University in Spokane, Washington. He was a member of the translation teams for the New Living Translation, the New International Version and the English Standard Version.

<sup>36</sup>S. Kubo, W. Specht, *So Many Versions*, p. 30.



witnessed the publication of some exceptional English versions. One of those versions is New American Standard Bible (NASB).

### **1. C. 2. The appearance of New American Standard Bible**

The New American Standard Bible was published by Lockman Foundation<sup>37</sup> which is Christian corporation of California. The foundation published Gospel of John in 1960, rest three Gospels in 1962, whole NT in 1963 and the entire Bible in 1971. The New American Standard Bible (NASB) is also known as New American Standard Version (NASV).

The foundation felt that ASV of 1901 was disappearing from scene which required rescuing that version from demise. Consequently a group of sixteen scholars worked to produce New American Standard Bible. The editors kept in mind twofold purpose of the version:

First purpose was to adhere to original language of Bible, and the second was to make reading style fluent in current English. The Semitic phrase "and it came to pass" has been modernized to the expression "and it happened". The words which were not in

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<sup>37</sup>The Lockman Foundation is a nonprofit Christian ministry dedicated to the publication, translation and distribution of literally accurate biblical versions. It was established by F. Dewey Lockman in 1942 when he felt the need for a translation of the Bible that would be readable in current English language but without sacrificing any accuracy in the translation from Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic. The primary purpose of The Lockman Foundation is to promote Christian educational enterprises. The Lockman Foundation strictly adheres to the fourfold aim that guides all of its translation work:

1. All publications should be true to the original Greek, Hebrew and Aramaic.
2. All translations shall be grammatically correct.
3. All publications shall be understandable.
4. They shall give Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) Christ the actual place which the word of God gives him.

original, but are essential to make the sense clear in English language are used in italics<sup>38</sup>.

F. F. Bruce<sup>39</sup> comments on NASB as "If RSV had never appeared, this revision of ASV would be more valuable than it is. There are few things done well by NASB which are not done better by RSV"<sup>40</sup>. In contemporary world, it is widely used by Evangelical Christians in America.

In 1979, Thomas Nelson and Sons (the publishers of ASV of 1901) was bought by an American corporation whose policies differed from British firm published ERV. Consequently the American corporation published the new version of KJV with the name of New King James Version<sup>41</sup> (NKJV).

In the introduction of this new version, group of revisers consisting of 119 scholars from different denominations declared that NKJV seeks to produce the revised English edition which will reveal the spiritual treasures found in KJV. There is no indication about these treasures at all in the revised version.

The publisher claimed that NKJV is the first major revision of KJV since 1867, however this claim was not factual because ERV of 1881 and ASV of 1901 were all efforts to revise KJV.

### **1. C. 3. Variety in English Versions**

We have seen that with the passage of time and as we arrived the 20<sup>th</sup> century, American Scholars produced more and more versions of Bible in English language. With

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<sup>38</sup>S. Kubo, W. Specht, *So Many Versions*, p. 179.

<sup>39</sup>Frederick Fyvie Bruce (1910-1990) who is mostly cited as F. F. Bruce was a modern Bible scholar who is considered to be one of the most influential apologetic scholars of his time. He wrote many books on reliability of New Testament but his first book named "New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?" is considered among the foundation stones of today's Evangelicalism. Aberdeen University gave him an honorary Doctoral degree of Divinity in 1957. He retired from teaching in 1978.

<sup>40</sup>Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *History of the Bible in English*, p. 259

<sup>41</sup>J. P. Lewis, *The English Bible, From KJV to NIV*, pp. 329-331.

every passing day, they tried to make it more simple and understandable so that everyone can read it without any commentary. It became the missionary work to make NT reader oriented and to provide everyone Bible in his mother tongue. The excess of English versions makes people confuse which version is to be used since all versions differ each other. The plethora of versions creates discrepancies because English language (like other languages) is constantly changing and every translator tries to make his version more conveniently readable to his community. This ultimately creates variances. Likewise there are different ways of translation, and every translator adopts his own way.

Both of Modern and Post Modern Scholars tried to make their work on the New Testament "hearer friendly" in order to attract their community. Therefore many scholars named 20<sup>th</sup> century approach as reader oriented<sup>42</sup>.

#### **Part IV**

### **Major Polemics and Apologetic Figures of 20<sup>th</sup> Century**

Part three of this chapter deals with contemporary American scholars. In today's world, Biblical Polemics and Apologetics are hot topics worldwide and especially in America. Biblical Polemics and Apologetics ask at what location and in which context a particular text was created. Why, for whom and by whom it was produced? What message it was intended to convey and what sources were used in its composition?

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy which was articulated by more than 200 evangelical cotemporary scholars at a conference held in Chicago in October 1978 is base for all apologetic scholars. In this conference, an official statement on biblical inerrancy was signed by all participants and in the same year it was publicized through publication of the whole statement in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. The core purpose of this conference and statement as well was to shield the

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<sup>42</sup> [www.journals.sagepub.com](http://www.journals.sagepub.com) Accessed June 27, 2017.

liberal ideas against the Inerrancy of Bible produced by Reformation and Enlightenment movements. The signers of the statement belonged to massive variety of Christian Evangelical denominations.<sup>43</sup>

In contemporary times Christianity (New Testament) is protected through the work of figures such as Richard G. Swinburne, Daniel Baird Wallace, Darrell L. Bock, Craig Alan Evans, Michael R. Licona, James Robert White and many others. Major Authors criticizing the reliability of the New Testament include Dr. Bruce M Metzger, Bart D. Ehrman and others. What are their approaches and their influences on their followers and contemporary world, to know this we need to know little bit about them.

#### **1. D. 1. Bruce Manning Metzger**

Bruce Manning Metzger was an American textual critic and biblical scholar who was Professor at Princeton Theological Seminary. He worked in the American board of Bible Society and United Bible Society as Bible editor. He was an expert of Greek manuscripts of New Testament and wrote frequently on the issue of New Testament textual criticism. Metzger is one of the most dominant scholars of the 20th century in New Testament scholarship.

Metzger got his BA in 1935 from Lebanon Valley College. He received his Bachelor of Theology in 1938 from Princeton Theological Seminary and in the same year began teaching at same institution. He completed his MA from Princeton University in 1940. After two years, he received his PhD from same University.<sup>44</sup>

He became full Professor in 1954. In 1971, he was selected president of the Society of Biblical Literature. He taught at Princeton Theological Seminary for about forty five years and at the age of seventy, he retired as Professor Emeritus. He received honorary doctorate degrees from various famous universities including University of St Andrews,

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<sup>43</sup>[https://library.dts.edu/TL/ICBI\\_1.pdf](https://library.dts.edu/TL/ICBI_1.pdf) Accessed July 02, 2017.

<sup>44</sup>[www.societyofbiblical literature.org/publications/article](http://www.societyofbiblical literature.org/publications/article) Accessed July 15, 2017.

Lebanon Valley College and Potchefstroom University<sup>45</sup>. Metzger's extraordinary knowledge of modern and ancient languages, his stable conclusions and his meticulous devotion to the critical studies of New Testament earned him admiration across the academic, theological and intellectual spectrum. Daniel B. Wallace<sup>46</sup> an evangelical scholar praised Metzger as: "A fine, godly, conservative scholar, although his view of biblical authority is not quite the same as many other evangelicals."<sup>47</sup>

Metzger produced various commentaries on numerous Bible translations and wrote large number of books and research articles. One of his major scholarly positions is that he served as the editor of Standard Greek New Testament which was produced by United Bible Society and considered to be the very beginning point for almost all current translations of the New Testament.

Among all his scholarly work on the New Testament, three books are of dominant importance in Biblical studies which are "The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origin, Development, and Significance", "The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption, and Restoration" and "The Early Versions of the New Testament: Their Origin, Transmission, and Limitations". All three are in wide circulation among contemporary Biblical scholars.<sup>48</sup>

The criteria identified by Metzger to consider any specific writing or book as sacred was generally adopted in antiquity during the time of compilation of New Testament and was never changed up till now is defined as orthodoxy which was defined as conformity to the rule of faith, apostolicity and consent of the churches.

Metzger died in the age of 93 at Princeton, New Jersey in 2007.

## **1. D. 2. Daniel Baird Wallace**

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<sup>45</sup> [www.sbl-site.org/publications](http://www.sbl-site.org/publications) Accessed August 02, 2017.

<sup>46</sup> He is president of the Evangelical Theological Society and an American professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary

<sup>47</sup> [www.societyofbiblicalliterature.org/publications/article](http://www.societyofbiblicalliterature.org/publications/article) Accessed July 06, 2017.

<sup>48</sup> [www.nationalcouncilofchurches.org/news](http://www.nationalcouncilofchurches.org/news) Accessed August 07, 2017.

Daniel Baird Wallace was born in California, United States on 5 June 1952. He is president of the Evangelical Theological Society and professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He is very actively involved in digitizing all known Greek manuscripts of New Testament for which he has instituted the Center for the Study of New Testament Manuscripts. The primary purpose of this center is to digitize all known Greek Manuscripts using digital photographs to preserve scripture.<sup>49</sup> He is one of the major figures of today's Christian apologetic world. He works extensively in textual criticism. He actively contributes to the Bart D. Ehrman Project (it is a website which critically analyses the works of Bart D. Ehrman)<sup>50</sup>.

Wallace did his B.A. in 1975 from Biola University and his MS (Th.M. degree) in 1979. He got PhD in New Testament studies in 1995 from Dallas Seminary. He did his postdoctoral study at various well known institutions including Christ's College, Westminster College Cambridge, Glasgow University as well as numerous monasteries and libraries in America, Europe, Australia, and Africa.<sup>51</sup>

Dr. Wallace regularly contributes on various scholarly platforms and is a member of Evangelical Theological Society, Society of Biblical Literature and some other scholarly societies.<sup>52</sup>

Due to his devotion to Greek New Testament and its preservation, he received number of academic awards including the Scholarship Award at Dallas Seminary for the best work in the Doctor of Philosophy program, an award for the best article in Christianity Today's fourth volume in 1990 and many other awards.

Wallace has published extensively on New Testament theology and produced more journals than any other faculty member in the history of Dallas Seminary including

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<sup>49</sup> [www.csntm.org/About/BoardOfDirectors](http://www.csntm.org/About/BoardOfDirectors) Accessed October 10, 2017.

<sup>50</sup> [www.ehrmanproject.com](http://www.ehrmanproject.com) Accessed October 10, 2017.

<sup>51</sup> [www.danielbwallace.com](http://www.danielbwallace.com) Accessed October 07, 2017.

<sup>52</sup> [www.dts.edu/academics/faculty](http://www.dts.edu/academics/faculty) Accessed October 07, 2017.

Novum Testamentum (Leiden, Holland), Christianity Today, Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society (Dallas) and International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences<sup>53</sup>.

Wallace wrote three Festschriften in the honor of (a collection of writings published in honor of a scholar) Homer Austin Kent<sup>54</sup>, Harold Walter Hoehner<sup>55</sup> and Bruce Metzger. He was invited for interviews by many famous magazines, newspapers and periodicals including Christianity Today<sup>56</sup>, National Post (Canada)<sup>57</sup> and many others. His has appeared on various television films including The Day Star's Celebration, the movie Jesus (Peace be upon him) of Testimony, the Jesus (Peace be upon him) Film, the CNN channels at American Airlines hubs as well as number of radio shows and websites<sup>58</sup>.

Wallace provided consultation for many of the New Testament translations including ESV (English Standard Version), TNIV (Today's New International Version), New King James Bible and New English Translation.

Wallace is a regular speaker on various levels at churches, apologetic conferences and universities. He debated many polemic scholars of 21<sup>st</sup> century including Bart D. Ehrman and debated with him thrice on the reliability of the New Testament manuscripts and textual criticism.<sup>59</sup>

### **1. D. 3. Darrell L. Bock**

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<sup>53</sup>[www.danielbwallace.com](http://www.danielbwallace.com) Accessed October 11, 2017.

<sup>54</sup>Homer Austin Kent was born in 1926. He taught New Testament and Greek from 1962 to 1976 in Grace Theological Seminary and later on became President of the Seminary. He is not only an educator, but also authored many books and Bible commentaries.

<sup>55</sup>Harold Walter Hoehner (1935-2009) was an American biblical scholar and professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He did his B.A. from Barrington College and his PhD from Cambridge University. His doctoral thesis was published by Cambridge University Press. Hoehner wrote for various scholarly journals

<sup>56</sup>Christianity Today is an evangelical Christian periodical magazine that was founded in 1956 and is based in Carol Stream, Illinois. ([www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com))

<sup>57</sup>The National Post is a Canadian English language newspaper. (<https://nationalpost.com>)

<sup>58</sup>[www.dts.edu/academics/faculty](http://www.dts.edu/academics/faculty) Accessed October 12, 2017.

<sup>59</sup>[www.danielbwallace.com](http://www.danielbwallace.com) Accessed October 11, 2017.

Darrell L. Bock was born on 12 December 1953. He is professor of New Testament studies at Dallas Theological Seminary. He mentored many prominent evangelical scholars including F. David Farnell and Daniel B. Wallace<sup>60</sup>. Bock received his PhD from University of Aberdeen Scotland.

Darrell Bock remained president of the Evangelical Theological Society for many years. He has written many research articles for various research journals including the Los Angeles Times and Dallas Morning News. He serves as editor for many magazines particularly Christianity Today.

The most famous among his research works on New Testament is "Breaking the Da Vinci Code" which was written in response to the novel "The Da Vinci Code" written by Dan Brown. It is one of the best-selling works among contemporary American scholarship. In this novel, Bock has explored some theological implications presented by Dan Brown in his book. He writes extensively for many websites and social links which include "beliefnet.com"<sup>61</sup> and "ChristianityToday.com"<sup>62</sup>. Bock believes on legitimate supremacy of Christian orthodoxy of antiquity over non canonical gospels and proved this point in his work "The Missing Gospels".

He appeared on many TV shows including TV show Nightline in which he discussed the film "The Da Vinci Code" before its release and deliberated the theological implications of the film and talked about his book written in response to that.<sup>63</sup>

Bock has debated many polemic biblical scholars including Bart D. Ehrman. He is one of the prominent figures of today's apologetic Christianity.

#### **1-D. 4. Craig Alan Evans**

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<sup>60</sup> [www.danielbwallace.com/cv](http://www.danielbwallace.com/cv) Accessed October 13, 2017.

<sup>61</sup> [www.Beliefnet.com](http://www.Beliefnet.com) Accessed October 13, 2017.

<sup>62</sup> [www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com) Accessed October 13, 2017

<sup>63</sup> [www.dts.edu/about/faculty/dbock](http://www.dts.edu/about/faculty/dbock) Accessed October 11, 2017.



**Craig Alan Evans is one of the prominent scholars of American apologetic Christianity. He has written extensively on New Testament. He is regular contributor to different research journals and written over 500 articles.**

**He did Bachelor in history and philosophy from Claremont McKenna College and Master in Divinity from Western Baptist Seminary in Portland. Later on, he received his Ph.D. in Theological and Textual Studies from Claremont Graduate University located at southern California.**

**He is considered to be an expert on early Christianity and development of Christian scripture. Presently he is professor at Houston Baptist University and teaches Christian Origins. Before joining the Houston Baptist University, he directed the graduate program at Acadia Divinity College and remained Distinguished Professor of Biblical studies.<sup>64</sup> He serves as visiting faculty at many other well-known universities and institutions including McMaster University and Trinity Western University and delivers lectures on religious studies as well as biblical studies. He also worked as an editor of the Bulletin for New Testament theological Research for about 11 years. His analysis on the origins of Christianity has wide impact on contemporary scholarship and therefore many conferences have been conducted on the topics of archeology of the Bible and discovery of Dead Sea Scrolls. He debated with Dr. Bart D Ehrman on the reliability of New Testament and portrayal of Jesus (peace be upon him) in New Testament.<sup>65</sup>**

#### **1. D. 5. James Robert White**

**James Robert White was born on 17<sup>th</sup> December 1962 at Minnesota, United States. He is actively involved in defense of inerrancy of the Bible and for that purpose he founded Alpha and Omega Ministries. The core job of this organization is to promote evangelical apologetics in order to counter the arguments raised by polemic scholars. He has written around 20 books on this issue and debated with many polemic scholars**

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<sup>64</sup> [www.sbcbaptistpress.org](http://www.sbcbaptistpress.org) Accessed October 14, 2017.

<sup>65</sup> [www.craigaeans.com](http://www.craigaeans.com) Accessed October 14, 2017.

Including Bart D. Ehrman on the topic “does the Bible misquote Jesus (peace be upon him)”.

He completed his Bachelors from Grand Canyon College and Masters In divinity from Fuller Theological Seminary. He provided consultancy to many evangelical institutions, most notably the Lockman Foundation to produce NASB (New American Standard Bible).

White has participated in more than 150 public debates covering different topics on various religions. His debate opponents have included scholars such as Bart D. Ehrman, John Dominic Crossan<sup>66</sup>, Marcus Joel Borg<sup>67</sup> as well as Islamic scholar Shabir Ally<sup>68</sup> and many others.<sup>69</sup>

#### **1. D. 6. Michael R. Licona**

Michael R. Licona was born on 17 July 1961 at Baltimore, Maryland. He is American apologetic scholar and historian. He works as Associate Professor at Houston Baptist University. Licona specializes in the literary analysis of the Gospels and the Resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

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<sup>66</sup>John Dominic Crossan was born on 17 February 1934. He is an Irish-American New Testament scholar and served for a long time as Catholic priest. He has focused in his research on the existence of historical Jesus (Peace be upon him) and the implementation of postmodern linguistic and textual approaches on the Bible.

<sup>67</sup>Marcus Joel Borg (1942-2015) was an American New Testament theologian and scholar. He was one of the most influential voices in progressive Christianity. He was a major figure in historical Jesus (Peace be upon him) scholarship. He retired as Professor of Religion at Oregon State University in 2007.

<sup>68</sup>Shabir Ally is a Canadian Muslim preacher who serves as the head of Islamic Information & Dawah Centre in Canada where he leads the prayers and gives sermons as Imam. He was born in Guyana which is located on the coast of South America and shifted along with his family to Canada in 1978. He holds Bachelors degree in Religious Studies from Laurentian University Ontario with major in religious studies and minor in Biblical literature. He completed his Masters and Ph.D. from University of Toronto with specialization in Quranic Exegesis. He travels throughout the world to represent Islam in interfaith dialogues and public lectures. He elaborates Islam on weekly television program named “Let the Quran Speak”.

<sup>69</sup>[www.aomin.org/aoblog/about](http://www.aomin.org/aoblog/about) Accessed October 15, 2017.

Licona is one of the most prominent apologetic scholars of America. Along with his expertise in Biblical studies, he is musician and skilled martial artist as well. He acquired undergraduate degree in music and got martial art skills from Robert Fujimura who was the Director of the United States Taekwondo Union<sup>70</sup>.

Licona completed his Master degree in Religious Studies from Liberty University. He received Ph.D. from University of Pretoria with distinction. His book "The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach" has been recommended by many famous Biblical scholars and historians<sup>71</sup>. He is very frequent speaker on the subject and addressed in various universities throughout the North America. He has also appeared on several TV channels and radio shows.

Majority his research focuses on the reconciliation of discrepancies found in the Gospels. He analyzed the reason behind differences that Gospels belong to the biographies of first century and therefore these are to be interpreted keeping in mind the first century context. He tried to identify the biographical devices used by Gospel writers because the biographical rules were different in antiquity as compare to modern time. In this way, he tried to reconcile the differences found in Gospels or Gospel versions.<sup>72</sup>

Licona conducted his doctoral research on the particular issue of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) resurrection. He has applied the historical approach to examine this issue. He concludes that almost all of the scholars who are conducting their researches on the resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him) are either philosophers or biblical scholars, but none of them is aware of philosophy of history and that is the point in which they lack.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup><http://taekwondoclub.org> Accessed October 20, 2017.

<sup>71</sup><http://www.lvpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/review> Accessed October 10, 2017.

<sup>72</sup>[www.youtube.com/watch?v=gospeldifferences](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gospeldifferences) Accessed October 13, 2017.

<sup>73</sup>[https://www.academia.edu/people/search/Michael\\_Licona](https://www.academia.edu/people/search/Michael_Licona) Accessed October 22, 2017.

## **Part V**

### **Dr. Bart Denton Ehrman**

The final part of chapter one consists of Bart D. Ehrman's life, his works and finally his debates and video lectures.

Bart D. Ehrman was born on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1955. Presently he is a Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at University of North Carolina. He started his teaching career at Rutgers University where he joined department of religion in 1984 as instructor and next year promoted to assistant professor till 1988, meanwhile he joined Princeton Theological Seminary in 1985 as Instructor of New Testament Greek and Exegesis. Later on in 1988 he joined the Department of Religious Studies at UNC (University of North Carolina), where he has served as both the Chair of the Department and the Director of Graduate Studies. As Adjunct Appointments, he served at Duke University in Department of Religion as visiting assistant professor in 1991 and as Adjunct Professor in 2000.<sup>76</sup>

His areas of interest include the history of Early Christianity and development of the New Testament. He is among the most distinguished scholars of New Testament in America. He has written or edited thirty books, dozens of book reviews and numerous scholarly articles. In addition to works of scholarship, Professor Bart D. Ehrman has also written several textbooks for college students and trade books for general spectators. His books have been translated into twenty seven languages.<sup>77</sup>

His five books have been awarded with New York Times Bestseller award which are: Misquoting Jesus (Peace be upon him); God's Problem; Jesus (Peace be upon him) Interrupted; Forged and How Jesus (Peace be upon him) Became God. Bart D. Ehrman's

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<sup>76</sup><https://www.bartdehrman.com/barts-biography> Accessed November 11, 2017.

<sup>77</sup><https://ehрманblog.org/about-bart> Accessed November 13, 2017.

work focuses on the historical Jesus (Peace be upon him), critical analysis of text of the New Testament and the development of early Christianity<sup>78</sup>.

### **1. E. 1. Early life and Education**

Professor Bart D. Ehrman was grew up in Lawrence, Kansas (state of USA) and earned his primary education from Lawrence High School. Since his childhood he was very much interested in public speaking and was a good speaker so he joined the debate team which was on the top in 1973.

Moody Bible Institute was the first institute where he started studying the Bible and its original languages, from the same institute he received his three years diploma in 1976. He did his graduation from Wheaton College (Illinois) in 1978, where he received magna cum laude (Latin Honor/Distinction) in his bachelor's degree. Professor Bart D. Ehrman completed his Masters in divinity and Ph.D. degrees at Princeton Theological Seminary and again in 1985 his doctoral dissertation was awarded with the distinctive Latin award magna cum laude (Latin Honor/Distinction)<sup>79</sup>. While doing his M.Div. and Ph.D. in Princeton Theological Seminary he was inspired by Bruce M Metzger.

Bart D. Ehrman describes in his book "Misquoting Jesus (Peace be upon him)" that he was purely fundamentalist Christian as a teenager and had environment in which there was strong belief that Bible is the inerrant inspired word of God but Bible reading was less emphasized.

When he was in fifth grade, he joined the Church where Church liturgy, practical and social issues were more focused than Bible reading, so until his high school years, he saw Bible as an important book full of mysterious things but not something to be understood. Later on when he joined high school and started joining meetings of youth for Christ Club which was led by Bruce M Metzger, things changed drastically and he

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<sup>78</sup><https://www.bartdehrman.com/barts-biography> Accessed November 10, 2017.

<sup>79</sup><https://www.bartdehrman.com/barts-biography> Accessed November 12, 2017.

journals. Presently he serves as co editor in chief for the international journal of early Christian studies and area editor for the Encyclopedia of Ancient History.<sup>82</sup>

### **1. E. 3. Academic Awards**

Professor Bart D. Ehrman is the winner of several university awards and fellowships including the University of North Carolina Foundation Junior Faculty Development Award for the production of "The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture". In 1990, the Society of Biblical Literature Research award for writing "The Text of the Fourth Gospel in the Writings of Origen" in 1991, the University of North Carolina Undergraduate Student Teaching Award in 1993, the Brandes Seminar Course Development Award at University of North Carolina in 1994, the Arts and Sciences Foundation Research Development award at University of North Carolina in 1995<sup>83</sup> and many others.

### **1. E. 4. Bart D. Ehrman's works**

Major focus of Bart D. Ehrman in all his works is on development of early Christianity and New Testament canon. He has written extensively on both academic and general level. He wrote 30 books which include several college textbooks. His five New York Times bestsellers are: *Misquoting Jesus*, *Jesus Interrupted*, *God's Problem*, *Forged* and *How Jesus Became God*.

His work has been featured in many research magazines and articles including the Washington Post, The Time, The New Yorker and other print media. He has appeared on various TV Shows including The CNN, The Discovery Channel, National Geographic, The BBC and other top media outlets.

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<sup>82</sup><https://www.bartdehrman.com/barts-biography> Accessed November 10, 2017.

<sup>83</sup><https://ehrmanblog.org/about-bart> Accessed November 16, 2017.

**Bart D. Ehrman has critically studied the Greek text and Doctrines of the New Testament. He has produced a large numbers of books and research articles.**

**His work may be divided into three categories:**

- 1. Books.**
- 2. Video lectures.**
- 3. Debates with other scholars.**

**Some of his important writings are following:**

- 1. How Jesus became God: The exaltation of a Jewish preacher from galilee, San Francisco: Harper One, 2014**

**This book took eight years for completion. Bart D. Ehrman examines transformation of Jesus (Peace be upon him) from a human prophet to the Son of God who was exalted to divine status at his resurrection. He has described the historical evolution of the belief of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) divinity.**

**Bart D. Ehrman answers the following questions in this book:**

- How did Jesus (Peace be upon him) moved from being a Human prophet to being God?**
- How did this transformation of Jesus (Peace be upon him) occur?**

**Before this book Bart D. Ehrman wrote one more book named "Did Jesus (Peace be upon him) Exist" in which he defended the historical existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him) to counter the Mythicist theory that Jesus (Peace be upon him) is totally fictitious being. So Bart D. Ehrman took sequence that firstly he proved the existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him) Christ and then he proved that Jesus (Peace be upon him) is human being and not divine being.**

- 2. Forged, New York: HarperCollins books, 2011**

**Some critical scholars often say that “writing in the name of another” was widely accepted in antiquity but Bart D. Ehrman calls it “literary forgery” in his book *Forged*. According to him this practice was as immoral in antiquity as it is today. In *Forged*, Bart D. Ehrman elaborates that in ancient world forgeries were used as weapons by unknown writers to establish their belief and fend off attacks to their faith.**

**Bart D. Ehrman examines ancient sources in his book to expose the dishonesty in the history of early development of Christian scripture and to explain how widely forgery was practiced by early Christians.**

**Bart D. Ehrman provides evidences in this book to prove that the ancient world largely condemned forgeries as much as the modern world does. He differentiates between the use of a pen name which is usually done to hide the writer’s identity and a forgery that claims to be the work of someone else. Bart D. Ehrman concludes that “early Christians were committed to establish what they thought as right by telling lies.”**

### **3. God’s problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question— Why We Suffer, New York: HarperCollins books, 2008**

**Bart D. Ehrman describes that people usually quote the Bible to give answers to their questions but amazingly the Bible does not have one answer rather many answers that often oppose each other. For example we have different explanations of “suffering” from various biblical writers; The prophets explain: “suffering is a punishment for sin” while The book of Job offers two different answers: the first one is that suffering is a test and you will be rewarded later for passing it, the second describes suffering as beyond comprehension.**

**The Old Testament and The New Testament both say: God will ultimately make right all that is wrong in the world. The question about the presence of evil in the world led the former preacher of the Princeton Baptist Church to reject Christianity.**



**In God's Problem, Bart D. Ehrman discusses his personal anguish upon discovering the Bible's contradictory explanations about "suffering" and invites all people to confront their deepest questions about how God engages the world.**

**4. Jesus Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions In the Bible, New York: HarperCollins books, 2009**

**In this book the author explains the progress to comprehend the Bible by the scholars of last two centuries and their conclusions which are often strange and shocking for general people. To accomplish this, he has mentioned in this book the variety of different opinions which exist in the New Testament, the presence of interpolated writings in the New Testament and his conviction that Christian dogmas such as the divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and the Trinity were later inventions.**

**In this book, Bart D. Ehrman reveals following points:**

- **The writers of the New Testament have contrary views about who Jesus (Peace be upon him) Christ was.**
- **The New Testament contains books that were changed in the names of the apostles by Christian writers who lived later decades.**
- **Established Christian beliefs such as the divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and the trinity were invented by later theologians and were not present in original manuscripts.**

**So the main theme of this book is inventions of doctrines by later theologians.**

**5. Misquoting Jesus: The Story behind Who Changed the Bible and Why, New York: HarperCollins books, 2005**

**He has focused in this book the development and origin of manuscript errors in the New Testament. He starts with copyists of early Christian writings, then he describes editions, manuscripts and differences of New Testament, then he moves to methods and discoveries of text, then he discloses theologically motivated alterations of the text and finally he concludes with scribes, authors and readers who changed the scripture.**

**In short in this book he outlines the gradual addition of mistakes due to accidental or intentional adjustments of copyists and attempts to reconstruct the original text.**

**6.      *Forgery and Counter Forgery*, New York: Oxford university press, 2013**

This book is an advanced version to look at the practice of forgery in the development of New Testament. In this book he pretended deceptions and forgeries in the names of the authors of new testament so he starts with forgeries in the name of Peter and Paul, then he describes alternatives to deceptions, then he moves to forgeries in conflicts with Jews and Pagans and with false teachers and finally he reveals false attributions, fabrications and falsifications.

**7.      *Studies in the Textual Criticism of the New Testament. New Testament Tools and Studies*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 2006.**

This book is collection of several essays written on different themes related to textual criticism. As a collection, it starts by exploring methodological developments in the Analysis and Classification of New Testament Documentation. Afterwards it elaborates the interconnections between the transmission of the text on the one hand and the social and theological development of early Christianity on the other hand. Finally it concludes with the role of New Testament manuscripts in early Christian studies.

**8.      Co-authored with Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Origin, Corruption, and Restoration*, 4th edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.**

This book deals with the different stages of reconstruction of New Testament text. It starts with the ancient materials used for the textual criticism of the New Testament like parchments, papyrus and others. Then it explores the history of New Testament textual criticism as reflected in printed editions of the Greek texts. Then it moves to Modern Methods of Textual Criticism and finally it concludes with the causes of errors in the transmission of the text of the New Testament.

**9. The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings, New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.**

This book describes the development of New Testament canon in the light of early Christian traditions. So it starts with Greco Roman tradition. Then it elaborates different portrayals of Jesus

(Peace be upon him) from four canonical Gospels in comparison to the other non-canonical Gospels of ancient times. Afterwards it analyses the Gospel according to Paul and finally it concludes with the reliability of New Testament canon.

Many other books have been written by Professor Bart D. Ehrman, some important are as follows:

- A Brief Introduction to the New Testament. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- After the New Testament: A Reader in Early Christianity. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus (Peace be upon him) in History and Legend. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- The Lost Gospel of Judas Iscariot: Betrayer and Betrayed Reconsidered. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

All of above mentioned books revolve around the development of early Christian tradition and transmission of New Testament text. The causes of errors in transmission of New Testament text and different critical approaches.

**1. E. 5. Video lectures and Media talks**

**As concern to his media talks, Bart D. Ehrman delivers lectures throughout the United States and has participated in many public debates. He has delivered many lectures in form of audio or video tapes which are known as "Great Courses". Some of these are following:**

- **Lost Christianities: The Struggle for Authentication in the Early Church (24 lectures), The Teaching Company. December, 2002.**
- **Introduction to the New Testament (24 lectures), The Teaching Company. January, 2000.**
- **The Historical Jesus (Peace be upon him) (24 Lectures), The Teaching Company. July, 2000.**
- **How Jesus (Peace be upon him) Became God (24 lectures), The Teaching Company. August 2014.**

**He has delivered many public lectures and presented many research papers in various universities and institutes all over the America. His recent public lecture series for last eight years is as follows:**

- **He conducted about 25 public lectures and book readings in 2009-2010 at local colleges, universities, seminaries, the Smithsonian Institute (Washington DC), the Biblical Archaeology Society, books stores, religious organizations and many other venues.**
- **He gave about 50 public lectures and book readings in 2010-2011 at local colleges, universities, seminaries, the Smithsonian Institute (Washington DC), the Biblical Archaeology Society, books stores, religious organizations and different other venues.**
- **He delivered about 35 public lectures and book readings in 2013-2012 at local colleges, universities, seminaries, the Biblical Archaeology Society, books stores, religious organizations and many other venues.**

- He presented about 25 public lectures and book readings in 2014-2015 for the Smithsonian Institute, the Program in the Humanities at UNC, the Biblical Archaeology Society, books stores and various other venues.
- He has conducted about 45 public lectures and book readings in 2015-2016 at local colleges, universities, seminaries, the Smithsonian Institute (Washington DC), the Biblical Archaeology Society, books stores, religious organizations and many other venues.

He has delivered lectures on New Testament and early Christianity in various American universities and colleges including University of Nevada, California State Northridge university, Black Mountain Institute, Loyola Marymount University, Acadia University, Southern Methodist University, University of Kentucky, Meredith College and many others.

Bart D. Ehrman has appeared on different TV Channels including Daily Show with Jon Stewart, CNN, History Channel, National Geographic, BBC, Discovery Channel, NBC Dateline and many other TV Channels and Programs<sup>84</sup>.

His Radio shows include Fresh Air, The Diane Rehm Show, The Leonard Lopate Show, The Milt Rosenberg Show, The State of Things and Talk of the Nation.

His research articles have been included in many research journals and magazines including Time, Newsweek, The New York Times, The New Yorker and The Washington Post.

Bart D. Ehrman has debated with many New Testament scholars including Richard Swinburne, Dinesh D'Souza, Daniel B. Wallace, Mike Licona, Craig A. Evans, James White and Darrell Bock.

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<sup>84</sup><https://ehрманblog.org/about-bart> Accessed November 16, 2017.

## **1. E. 6. Position of Bart D. Ehrman among Contemporary American Scholars**

Bart D. Ehrman delivers lectures extensively throughout the country. He is winner of numerous university awards and grants and has been praised by many contemporary scholars. Many of his books have been awarded with New York Times Best Sellers Award.

Some testimonials about Bart D. Ehrman's professionalism by his contemporaries are as under:

Daniel B Wallace has admired Bart D. Ehrman as "one of the America's leading textual critics" and labels him as "the most bright and innovative textual critics of this time"<sup>85</sup> in his review article on Bart D. Ehrman's *Misquoting Jesus*, however Wallace argues in article that sometimes Bart D. Ehrman overemphasizes his view point by supposing that his view is surely correct, since Bart D. Ehrman acknowledges that most of the variants found in New Testament are minor and therefore can be reconciled, but his popular writing and speaking style (because of his exaggeration) makes those minor variants the major problem for the originality and Inerrancy of New Testament.

Bart D. Ehrman's book "The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings" is commonly used as text book at American colleges and universities which shows the influence of his writings on his society.

While speaking to CNN, a Methodist minister Rev. Guy Williams commented about Bart D. Ehrman as: "His stance towards the originality of New Testament is a gift to his opponent scholarship because It provides the opportunity to explore Bible's claims and seek original doctrines of Christianity"<sup>86</sup>.

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<sup>85</sup><http://www.etsjets.org/JETS-PDFs/Wallace.pdf> Accessed November 20, 2017.

<sup>86</sup>[http://www.salon.com/2009/04/03/Jesus\\_interrupted](http://www.salon.com/2009/04/03/Jesus_interrupted) Accessed November 20, 2017.

Michael F. Bird observes that "for conservative Christians, Bart D. Ehrman is a bit of a bogeyman, because his constant studies and critics on Bible and Christian Theology attacks and makes doubtful their long held beliefs and scripture. However for seculars who mostly belong to the developing group of "nones" (who believe on no religion, but despite that they do not claim athelism or agnosticism) Bart D. Ehrman is a blessing.

When Bart D. Ehrman claimed that his views about Bible are supported by majority scholars and there is consensus on that view, some Evangelical scholars like Darrell L. Bock and Josh D. Chatraw disagreed Bart D. Ehrman's illustration of scholarly consent by saying: "the claim of support by majority scholars is only true by excluding scholars who disagree with him and by describing the majority of scholarship in his own terms."<sup>87</sup> The same disagreement has been described by Michael R. Licona as "his claim about other scholars support is not original, as his views are largely accepted and supported by conventional skeptical scholars and not by Evangelical scholars.

So there are different responses from contemporary scholarship towards the work of Bart D. Ehrman. Most of the liberals and seculars are comfortable with his position, rather they are influenced by him whereas number of Evangelicals are opposing his work and not happy with his stance. But keeping in view his awards, his media talks and his New York Times Best Selling works we can consider him as an influential personality of today's American world.

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<sup>87</sup><https://books.google.com.pk/books/twopage&q&f=false> Accessed November 20, 2017



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Bart D. Ehrman's Approach to the Doctrines and Theology of the New Testament**

There are different aspects of New Testament on which scholars are conducting their research. My focus in this chapter will be on Doctrinal and Theological Aspect of The New Testament from Bart D. Ehrman's point of view. Bart D. Ehrman has discussed and written many books and articles on various Doctrinal and Theological aspects of New Testament. I have divided this chapter into two parts. Part one will be dealing with Doctrines of New Testament explored by Bart D. Ehrman namely the belief of Jesus "Christ" (Messiah) (Peace be upon him), inerrancy of Bible, theodicy and resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him). Whereas part two consists of Theological issues examined by Bart which includes historical existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him), divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and finally the Trinity. Before going in details, it looks relevant to me to start this chapter by differentiating Doctrine and theology.

#### **Doctrine & Theology**

Doctrine and theology looks like the synonyms, but scholars have defined both in various ways. I will define both of these one by one.

#### **Doctrine:**

The origin of word doctrine is Latin word "*Doctrina*". It means teachings or instructions. It may be used in the active sense as the imparting of knowledge as well as in the passive sense for what is taught.<sup>88</sup> Oxford dictionary defines it as "A belief or set of beliefs held and taught by a Church, political party or other group". So it is a broad term used for set of beliefs which is taught by any religion or group.

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<sup>88</sup>Thomas Carson, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, (Michigan: Gale Publisher, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, 2002) p. 802.

### **Theology:**

The word Theology is derived from Greek word "*Theologia*" which is combination of "*Theos*" means "God" and "*Logos*" means "account, word or sayings". Thus the term Theology refers to the study about the nature of divine being. Oxford dictionary defines it as "The study of the nature of God and religious belief". The word "theological" governs the field which studies systematic knowledge of the divine mysteries.

Theology may be divided into two fields. The first is known as natural theology which examines the nature of God through what can be known about him from the created world by the logical reasoning. The second one is called sacred theology which elaborates divine nature through revelation given by God.<sup>89</sup>

Keeping above definitions in view, it becomes evident that doctrine is a general term which covers all beliefs whereas theology is specific to belief about nature of divine.

The first part of this chapter consists of Doctrines approached by Bart D. Ehrman and includes:

1. Belief of Jesus (Peace be upon him) being Christ.
2. Inerrancy of New Testament.
3. Theodicy.
4. Resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

Now I will analyze all of above one by one.

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<sup>89</sup>Thomas Carson, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, p. 891.

## **Section I**

### **Bart D. Ehrman's Approach to the Doctrines of the New Testament**

The first part of this chapter covers the Biblical doctrines approached by Bart D. Ehrman. Bart D. Ehrman has examined various Biblical doctrines including the belief on Jesus (Peace be upon him) being Christ (Messiah), Inerrancy of Bible in which his focus is on antiquity and early development of Christianity, the problem of evil as justified by Bible and resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him). The major doctrine explored by Bart D. Ehrman is Inerrancy of New Testament since New Testament has become the central fundamental to all Christian denominations in America now days. It was not the case in antiquity as I will discuss it later on. In ancient times, faith on Jesus (Peace be upon him) and worship of God remained fundamental object of faith. The thorough examination of development of early Christianity led Bart D. Ehrman to conclude that New Testament specifically and Christianity generally is very human religion as it comes down to us today. Now I will explain all of the four doctrines one by one.

#### **2. A. 1. Jesus (Peace be upon him) the Christ (Messiah):**

The concept of Jesus (Peace be upon him) being Christ is very common in today's Christianity. Every denomination believes on Jesus (Peace be upon him) the Christ. The word Christ is not the surname of Jesus (Peace be upon him), instead it is Greek word which is equivalent to Hebrew term Messiah which literally means anointed one. So Jesus Christ means "Jesus (Peace be upon him) is the messiah".

According to Bart D. Ehrman, the concept of Christ is invention of later Christians who wrote the Gospels. How did it emerge? It needs some historical background.

It is usually believed among Christians that the Old Testament repeatedly and constantly predicted about what Messiah would experience and what would he do and

Jesus (Peace be upon him) fulfilled all these predictions. For example In Old Testament, the book of Isaiah<sup>90</sup> and book of Psalm<sup>91</sup> explains in details that how Messiah will horribly suffer and Jesus (Peace be upon him) suffered all that pain. It means that he was the Christ (Messiah). It looks quite simple but it is not. If we go through the complete books of Isaiah and Psalm, we find not a single time word of Messiah is mentioned in these books. So how can we relate all suffering and pain mentioned in books of Isaiah and Psalm to Messiah? Instead the pain and suffering mentioned in those books is about all the pious and righteous people who suffer in the name of God.

Bart D. Ehrman argues that initially before the emergence of Christianity there was no concept of suffering Messiah. There were various expectations from Messiah found in Old Testament and all were totally opposite from what happened with Jesus (Peace be upon him) actually<sup>92</sup>. The term Messiah which literally means “anointed one” was used for kings who were anointed with oil ceremonially as a symbol of divine love and favor indicating that they have to implement divine will on earth since they are God’s chosen one. Various kings were said to be anointed one in Old Testament.<sup>93</sup> All people given this title were in power.

Moreover, we find in Old Testament that God promised Prophet David (Peace be upon him) that there would always be a successor of Prophet David (Peace be upon him) sitting on the throne as Book of Psalms in Old Testament says “And your house and your kingdom shall endure before me forever; your throne shall be established forever”<sup>94</sup>, but history disconfirmed this and Babylonians invaded the nation of Judah. Since God had promised so scribes thought that God will fulfill his promise by restoring an anointed king who would rule over them and he would be the Messiah.

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<sup>90</sup>Isaiah 53:1-10.

<sup>91</sup>Psalm 22:1-6.

<sup>92</sup>Bart D Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted: Revealing the Hidden Contradictions in the Bible*, (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2009), p. 229.

<sup>93</sup>1 Samuel 10:1, Leviticus 4:3-5.

<sup>94</sup>2 Samuel 7:14-16.

So the expectation of Messiah was that he would be the powerful warrior king who would rule over them. When Jesus (Peace be upon him) came, Christians started believing that he is the Christ (Messiah) for whom Jews were waiting, although he was not powerful king because he did not overthrow the Romans and there was no prophecy for suffering Messiah in Old Testament as well but they believed that he was the Messiah. When his crucifixion disconfirmed the fact that he was the Messiah, Christians found another way to confirm it. Some Christians believed that God had raised him from dead which shows that he was God's chosen one because God had given him a special favor and so he was the Messiah. This was the turning point which brought the new concept of suffering Messiah which was absent previously. Christians merged two concepts in order to prove their belief.<sup>95</sup> They said that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was the Messiah and he suffered so Messiah had to suffer and linked all verses which explain suffering of righteous people i.e. Isaiah chapter 53 and Psalm chapter 22 with the prophecies of coming Messiah. It has been mentioned earlier that there was no prophecy of suffering Messiah since Messiah is not mentioned in these verses but early Christians argued that these passages were actually referring to suffering Messiah although Messiah is not mentioned. In this way they developed and invented the concept of Jesus the Christ which exists even today.

If we read Old Testament we find many other prophecies about Messiah which Jesus (Peace be upon him) had fulfilled, for example that he would be born of a virgin, he would be born in Bethlehem and many others. So how it happened? Bart D. Ehrman answers this question in very historic way. He argues that we got accounts of Jesus (Peace be upon him) life through Gospels which were written based on orally transmitted stories which were in circulation at that time. The story tellers were not ignorant of Old Testament and they told the stories about Jesus (Peace be upon him) in light of what Old Testament predicted about Messiah. So Gospel writers wrote the accounts of Jesus (Peace be upon him) keeping in mind the predictions of Scripture told

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<sup>95</sup>Bart D Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, p. 233.

by the story tellers and making sure that his life fulfilled the predictions at every point. Therefore belief of suffering Messiah is the invention of early Christians<sup>96</sup>.

## **2. A. 2. Bart D. Ehrman's approach**

Bart has analyzed the belief about Jesus Christ keeping in view the formation of New Testament era. His approach is historical critical approach and he traced back to origin of this belief. He finds that the concept of Messiah (Christ) and suffering both are present in Old Testament, but there is no concept of suffering Messiah. This is very much true because if we read the passages being quoted for suffering Messiah, we find that word Messiah or anointed has not been mentioned in passages which give details about suffering. The concept of anointed one (Messiah) is present independently and concept of suffering is independent. Both have no relation with each other.

Since Gospel writers transmitted the stories about Jesus Christ (suffering Messiah) keeping in view the prophecies given in Old Testament, therefore our present New Testament literature portrays Jesus (Peace be upon him) as suffering Messiah who fulfills all the prophecies being told by Old Testament and it has become a fundamental belief to all Christian denominations.

## **2. B.1. Inerrancy of New Testament**

The belief on inerrancy of New Testament is central and most important for today's Christian communities. They strongly believe that New Testament is the word of God and transmitted to them without any interpolation. Bart D. Ehrman had the same understanding of New Testament before he started historical study of ancient sources. After he applied lower criticism approach on texts of Gospels, he changed his mind as I have mentioned in first chapter and came to believe that New Testament is full of

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<sup>96</sup>ibid, p. 235.

discrepancies which led to the conclusion that it is a human book because word of God cannot contradict each other. This was turning point for his life and he adopted agnosticism instead of being evangelical Christian for long time. Now he presents doubts on every aspect of New Testament.

During a debate with Mike Licona, Bart argues that Biblical Inerrancy was not the fundamental belief in antiquity; rather it emerged later on because initially there was no New Testament. Earliest Christians deliberated on which books are to be included in New Testament canon on the basis of proper belief (orthodoxy) and improper belief (heresy) and after long heated debates the New Testament canon came into existence.<sup>97</sup> This was all human process and resulted in lot of discrepancies among New Testament books.

Many apologetic scholars still consider biblical inerrancy as a fundamental belief to Christianity. They respond to discrepancies in New Testament that most of these may be reconciled while some may be not, but we cannot say that if there is one mistake or discrepancy in New Testament, it makes the whole book unreliable. Moreover, Gospels are not to be evaluated in today's context, instead these are to be evaluated in context of first century.

Bart D. Ehrman has used internal evidences to explore discrepancies in New Testament. He applied both intrinsic probabilities (consideration of what the author probably wrote) and transcriptional probabilities (consideration of how scribes probably copied).<sup>98</sup> While applying these methods, he emphasized on a new way to read New Testament which is very different from usual reading style. The usual reading style of any book is known as "vertical" reading in which we start reading from top of the page till bottom, like wise we move to the end of the book. If we read Gospels in this way, we will find these absolutely fine. But if we read New Testament

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<sup>97</sup>Debate between Mike Licona and Bart Ehrman on Biblical evidence for Jesus resurrection. ([www.youtube.com/Biblical\\_evidence\\_for\\_Jesus\\_resurrection](http://www.youtube.com/Biblical_evidence_for_Jesus_resurrection))

<sup>98</sup>Bart D Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, p. 22.

**“horizontally”, for example we read one story in Gospel of Matthew and then read the same story in Gospel Luke and compare both stories, we find many differences and discrepancies. Sometimes these differences are of minor nature and can be reconciled, whereas sometimes there are major differences which cannot be reconciled.**

**The second kind of difference cause doubts on inerrancy of New Testament. For example we find in Gospel of Matthew that Jesus (Peace be upon him) taught his followers that they need to keep the laws given by Old Testament if they want to enter the heaven so it says “Do not think that I came to abolish the Law of the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill”.<sup>99</sup> In this verse, Jesus (Peace be upon him) is portrayed as a preacher of laws of Old Testament who urges his followers to not to break the law by observing it. Whereas if we study Galatians horizontally (chapter 5, verse 4-7), we find Paul teaching that obeying the law of Old Testament has nothing to do with entering heaven, instead the faith on death and resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him) matters only.**

**The question arises here that whether Jesus (Peace be upon him) and Paul taught the same religion or not, since Jesus (Peace be upon him) taught the law and Paul denied it and emphasized on personality of Jesus (Peace be upon him). This kind of difference cannot be reconciled. By reading New Testament horizontally, we find many discrepancies. Why and how these differences emerged? To know this, it is appropriate to analyze the history behind it.**

## **2. B. 2. Emergence of discrepancies**

**In fourth century, when the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, many educated and trained people also converted to Christianity and eventually scriptoriums were established for reproduction of the Bible.<sup>100</sup>**

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<sup>99</sup>Matthew 5:17-20.

<sup>100</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, p. 73.



(Peace be upon him) (as they believed) does not know about the end of time. To resolve this problem, they simply modified the text by omitting "nor even the son".<sup>103</sup>

Sometimes copyist changed the text for more deliberately theological reasons to ensure that text say what is supposed to mean by scribes or to ensure that favorite doctrine is duly emphasized in the text as I will discuss this in three major Christologies about nature of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and related modifications under theology title.

Accidental changes occurred because Greek manuscripts were mostly written with no punctuation and without spaces between words, as a result words which looked similar were mostly mistaken. For example, in Paul's letter, he tells his readers to "participate in Christ's Passover lamb and not to eat old leaven which is leaven of wickedness and evil".<sup>104</sup> The word "evil" is written in Greek as "PONERAS" which looks similar to the word "PORNEIAS" which means sexual dishonesty. Due to similarity of both words, many surviving manuscripts present Paul explicitly warning against the sexual vice instead of general evil which is the result of accidental change.<sup>105</sup>

Another type of common mistake is known as periblepsis (eye-skip) which occurred due to same endings. This type of mistake occurs when ending of two lines is same. The copyist copies the first line of text and then picks up the same word on the next line due to his eye skip and continues copying which results in leaving the intervening line.<sup>106</sup> This kind of mistake happened in Gospel of Luke<sup>107</sup>. The verse says "whoever confesses me before humans will confess before the angles of God", in next verse it says "but whoever denies me before humans will be denied before the angles of God". In some earliest manuscripts, copyist left the complete second verse because when he copied in first verse the phrase "before the angles of God" and his eye returned to the page, he took the same words in

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<sup>103</sup> Debate between James White and Bart D Ehrman on Did the Bible misquote Jesus.

([www.youtube.com/Did the Bible misquote Jesus](http://www.youtube.com/Did_the_Bible_misquote_Jesus))

<sup>104</sup> 1 Corinthians 5:8.

<sup>105</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, Bart D. Ehrman, *The Text of the New Testament: Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 4<sup>th</sup> ed, 2005), pp. 139-154.

<sup>106</sup> Video lecture on Misquoting Jesus by Hynes lecture series. ([www.youtube.com/Misquoting Jesus](http://www.youtube.com/Misquoting_Jesus))

<sup>107</sup> Luke 12:8-9.

second verse and supposed that these words were just copied and consequently left the second verse altogether. Sometimes this kind of mistake results in more disastrous meaning of the text as in Gospel of John, Jesus (Peace be upon him) says in his prayer about his followers to God "I do not ask that you keep them from the world, but that you keep them from the evil one".<sup>108</sup> In one of the manuscripts, the first sentence has been omitted which produces the phrase "I do not ask that you keep them from the evil one" which is completely wrong and unfortunate prayer<sup>109</sup>.

Sometimes accidental mistakes happened due to similar sound while copying the text in scriptorium through dictation. If two words are pronounced the same, then copyist may write wrong word in place of the right word. For example, in book of revelation the writer prays to "the one who released us from our sins".<sup>110</sup> The Greek word for "released" is "LUSANTI" which closely sounds similar to the word "LOUSANTI" which means washed and so in many medieval manuscripts we find the verse as "who washed us from our sins".<sup>111</sup>

Sometimes this kind of mistake does not make any sense, for example in fourteenth century minuscule manuscript, in Gospel of Luke where genealogy of Jesus (Peace be upon him) is described, the scribe copied the text from the manuscript that gave genealogy in two columns. Copyist mistakenly copied across the two columns which resulted in mingling the genealogies by making many people being called the sons of wrong fathers.<sup>112</sup> The most striking is that it says "the father of human race is Israelite named Phares and God himself is son of Aram"<sup>113</sup> which is completely nonsense. These all are examples of accidental changes.

This practice continued throughout the middle ages till invention of printing presses through which bulk copies of Bible were produced.

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<sup>108</sup> John 17:15.

<sup>109</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, pp. 90-92.

<sup>110</sup> Revelation 1:5.

<sup>111</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, p.93.

<sup>112</sup> Debate between Darrel Bock and Bart D. Ehrman on Was the New Testament forged.

([www.youtube.com/was the New Testament forged](http://www.youtube.com/was-the-new-testament-forged))

<sup>113</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, p. 94

In fifteenth century, printing presses emerged which changed everything for reproduction of Bible. Various versions of Bible emerged as books could be produced more accurately and more rapidly as compare to scriptoriums. Resultantly, as the production of New Testament versions increased, the mistakes and discrepancies augmented manifold.

### **2. B. 3.        Approach of Bart D. Ehrman**

To prove inerrancy of New Testament, Bart D. Ehrman has applied textual criticism as well as historical critical approach on the text of New Testament by using internal evidences both intrinsic probabilities (consideration of what the author probably wrote) and transcriptional probabilities (consideration of how scribes probably copied). He emphasized on unreliability of New Testament manuscripts due to the reasons I have mentioned above. His influence on modern scholarship is prevalent due to his solid arguments. We can imagine his impact on contemporary world by noticing that Christian apologetic scholars of modern time are also accepting the fact during debates with Bart D. Ehrman that inerrancy of New Testament is not the fundamental belief of Christianity today. Mike Licona acknowledged during a debate with Bart D. Ehrman that there are discrepancies in New Testament, but inerrancy of the Bible is not the fundamental belief to be a Christian, instead belief on Jesus (Peace be upon him) and worship of God is fundamental. Bart D. Ehrman also clarified that for a long time he was a Christian believing that New Testament is not in its original form due to contradictions between books of New Testament. It was not the only reason to leave the faith, rather existence of evil in the world forced him to leave the Christian faith and became agnostic.

The method used by Bart D. Ehrman known as "horizontal reading style" definitely proves his stance since one can compare any two books of the New Testament by reading both side by side which will lead to the conclusion that there are discrepancies.

### **2. C. 1.        Suffering and Theodicy**

The problem of Theodicy or existence of evil is one of the hot debated issues of contemporary world. Many philosophers and polemic scholars take it as a problem which cannot be justified. Bart D. Ehrman has extensively written and debated on this issue as well. He mentions in his several books that after deep analysis of the issue of suffering, he started believing that there is no God who is worthy of worship, praise or fear due to existence of evil and pain in life. He could not reconcile the existence of suffering with the presence of all powerful, all loving and actively involved God in this world.

The term Theodicy was coined in 17<sup>th</sup> century when the problem of evil became the burning issue. This term is combination of two separate Greek words. The first one is "Theos" meaning God and the other one is "Dike" meaning justice. Word "Theodicy" explains the problem that why there is so much pain and suffering in the world which is created by God who is just and has control over it.<sup>114</sup>

There are different responses to problem of evil in the Bible. Bart D. Ehrman debated with many scholars on this issue but he could not find any satisfactory answer which led to shaken his belief and ultimately he acknowledged "agnosticism".

He states his belief on the God as "I do not know whether God exists or not, but I think that if God exists, he certainly is not the one who is powerfully and actively involved in this world as proclaimed by the Christian tradition."<sup>115</sup>

This problem is based on three declarations that appear to contradict each other if all three are true. The declarations are:

God has all powers of this world.

God loves all his creatures.

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<sup>114</sup>Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), pp. 9-15.

<sup>115</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *God's problem: How the Bible fails to Answer our Most Important Questions, Why We Suffer*, (New York: Harper Collins books, 2005), p. 4.

**There is Pain and suffering in this world.<sup>116</sup>**

**All of above three cannot be true at once because if God has all the powers then he must be able to do everything and since he is all loving and does not want people to suffer so why suffering exists, why there is pain in world and why God does not remove suffering from the world.**

**Most of the contemporary western scholars i.e. Richard G Swinburn and others relate existence of suffering to the free will given to humans which differentiates humans from angels. Humans have free will to do good or bad, to follow the righteous or fraudulent path, to obey or disobey God. This free will to do bad things is the reason behind suffering. Bart D. Ehrman rejects this logic in his debate with Richard G Swinburn by arguing that it cannot work in the suffering caused by earthquakes, storms, floods and other natural disasters in which there is no involvement of human freewill. Richard answers that natural disasters provide us certain opportunities to form our character, to be patient on suffering or to be bitter, to take good step which leads to shape good character or to take bad step which paves way to bad character<sup>117</sup>.**

**According to Bart D. Ehrman, freewill concept is bit problematic, because it is agreed upon that freewill will be given to humans in heaven but there will be no suffering and pain at all. Why people in heaven will know how to exercise freewill if they don't know how to exercise it on earth. Why people on earth have not been given intelligence to use freewill in positive way as they will use it in heaven.<sup>118</sup>**

**To avoid these problems, many scholars are of the opinion that existence of suffering is a mystery and it cannot be questioned.**

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<sup>116</sup> Debate between Bart D. Ehrman and Richard G. Swinburn on The problem of evil.  
([www.youtube.com/the problem of evil](http://www.youtube.com/the problem of evil))

<sup>117</sup> From Islamic point of view, human's freewill can be reason behind natural disasters as I will analyze this in the last chapter.

<sup>118</sup> Debate between Bart D. Ehrman and Richard G. Swinburn on The problem of evil.  
([www.youtube.com/the problem of evil](http://www.youtube.com/the problem of evil))

Different Bible authors are concerned with this problem and responded the problem of suffering in different ways.

## **2. C. 2.       Suffering as atonement**

The Book of Prophets in Old Testament says that suffering comes to people as punishment of sins. People have to obey God, when they violate his laws and disobey him by committing sins, he punishes them in order to bring them on right path and lead righteous lives.<sup>119</sup> This justification works as long as disobeying people are suffering, but we see in the world that righteous people also suffer many times. Why righteous suffers, there is no answer to this question according to this explanation.

This understanding can be seen in the New Testament that Jesus (Peace be upon him) suffered death (according to Christian belief against the Islamic view point) due to other's sins. Christians who claim suffering as atonement assume that it was sacrifice for sins of others. Paul presented similar view in his first letter to Corinthians by stating: "I handed over to you what I had received as of first importance: that according to Scriptures Christ died for our sins".<sup>120</sup>

The concept of atonement is more explicit in Paul's letter to Romans in which he states that because of people's sin, anger of God came upon all<sup>121</sup> but Jesus (Peace be upon him) brought atonement by sacrificing himself for the sins of others.<sup>122</sup> This depiction by Paul supports the claim of existence of suffering as atonement that sins lead to punishment and Jesus (Peace be upon him) took the punishment upon himself (according to Paul and New Testament interpretation) so resultantly Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death can atone for the sins of others (its contrary to Islamic doctrine which is survival of Jesus (Peace be upon him) through crucifixion). The entire doctrine of

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<sup>119</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *God's problem*, pp. 33-34.

<sup>120</sup>1 Corinthians 15:3.

<sup>121</sup>Romans 1:18.

<sup>122</sup>Romans 3:23-25.

atonement is based on the explanation of suffering as punishment of sins. This view (atonement) is more evidently portrayed in Gospel of Mark as it says: "The son of man (Jesus Peace be upon him) did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many".<sup>123</sup> The word "ransom" indicates that Jesus's (Peace be upon him) life was given as compensation of other's sins.

The idea of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death for sacrifice as sins of others presented by Gospels and Paul in his letters is not factual because question arises here that if death of Jesus (Peace be upon him) as claimed by Gospels and Paul is atonement for others than why do people still suffer, if Jesus (Peace be upon him) had given his life as compensation for other's sin then why there is pain and suffering, why people are being punished on their sins if Jesus (Peace be upon him) death was ransom for others sins. In response to the objection, later Christians think that suffering against sins will come in life hereafter, not in this world and since Jesus (Peace be upon him) had taken punishment on himself therefore there will be no punishment and suffering in hereafter for believers of Jesus (Peace be upon him) but it is not at all satisfying answer because it does not cater the actual problem which is the existence of evil and pain in this material world, not hereafter.

### **2. C. 3. Redemptive suffering**

This understanding of suffering discloses the redemptive suffering which tells us that suffering has a positive aspect to it. Sometimes the pain is to bring good things, a good which comes out of the evil. Sin does not always lead to bad results rather suffering can be redemptive (as the suffering of Jesus Peace be upon him due to other's sin brings salvation).

Paul believed that suffering brings many benefits as he mentions in his letter to Romans that suffering builds character: "We even boast in our afflictions, knowing that

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<sup>123</sup>Mark 10:45.

affliction produces endurance, and endurance produces a proven character; and a proven character produces hope".<sup>124</sup>

Bart D. Ehrman is totally opposed to that idea believing that we cannot universalize the concept that suffering always brings something good, because the reality shows that most of the sufferings do not have any good outcome, instead lead to miserable consequences. We see in our daily life that there is a lot of suffering which is not at all redemptive for anyone.

He further rejects the idea that someone else's suffering is intended to help others (atonement). Our own sufferings and hardships can make us better, stronger and more humane but other's suffering cannot make us better or happier. It is totally egocentric and coldhearted concept that one enjoys life because of other's suffering. Sometimes one's own misfortune may have some good outcome but it cannot be the result of any other's pain.

Dr Richard clarifies that suffering is just like a surgeon's surgery in which a patient has to face a lot of pain but its consequences lead to good health.<sup>125</sup> Likewise, the parents of a diabetic patient child will have to inject insulin in his body twice a day to keep his sugar level controlled, although the child cries and dislikes it very much but parents have to do it forcefully for the benefit of the child. God who has created the entire world has more right on all human kind than parents of a child to give them pain for their benefit.

## **2. C. 4. Suffering as a test**

Another approach which is found in the Bible is that suffering comes as a test to check whether people would remain faithful despite suffering or they leave the faith. Different people have been mentioned in the Bible as exemplary characters who faced a lot of suffering even death but despite all pain they remained faithful and obedient to

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<sup>124</sup>Romans 5:3-5.

<sup>125</sup>Debate between Bart D. Ehrman and Richard G. Swinburn on The problem of evil ([www.youtube.com/the\\_problem\\_of\\_evil](http://www.youtube.com/the_problem_of_evil))



God. In Old Testament Prophet Ayoob (Job Peace be upon him) is mentioned as example who faced lot of suffering but remained faithful. In New Testament, Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) is the exemplary character who encountered many difficult situations (rejection, mocked, put on the cross) but he remained faithful because all this was will of God. When they remained faithful and passed their test, they were rewarded and end result of both stories was good. Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) was exalted to heavens and Prophet Ayoob (Job) (Peace be upon him) was given more than before. Likewise, all suffering in the world is test to check whether people start complaining or they remain faithful.

Dr. Bart rejects this approach by stating: "I assume people who have blind trust in God might perceive suffering as a way of showing their devotion to him, and this could be a good thing because it provides a sense that despite everything that happens, God has all the powers. But it is not at all satisfying response to the question of why people are forced to bear pain. Are we supposed to believe on divine being who wants to give pain to his creatures just to check their level of faith? It is very evident that Job was innocent because he had done nothing to deserve suffering. And God did torment him by taking away his all possessions including his children and physical health. Why they were senselessly slaughtered? So that God could prove a point? Is it justified? The most offensive part of the book of Job is when God restores all what the Prophet had lost. Prophet Job (Peace be upon him) lost seven sons and three daughters and as an incentive for his faithfulness, God gave him an additional seven sons and three daughters. It shows that the pain of a child's death may be removed by the birth of another which means that children are replaceable like a faulty computer or DVD player".<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *God's problem*, pp. 172-174.

**Bart D. Ehrman rejects this approach on purely logical basis. The problem of evil cannot be completely understood on mere rational basis without involving the divine guidance as I will analyze in final chapter.**

**In cut short, different the Bible authors responded problem of evil in numerous ways. Some consider pain and suffering as punishment for sin, some believe that wretchedness is due to freewill of human beings who exploit others, some see suffering as redemptive phenomena, some argue that misery comes as a trial from God to see if people will remain faithful to him or not.**

## **2. C. 5. Skeptic approach of Bart D. Ehrman**

**Bart rejects all approaches on intellectual grounds and presents very skeptical view about suffering. An approach which claims suffering as punishment of sin is rejected by Bart D. Ehrman saying that birth defects and massive starvation cannot be punishment of sin. The approach which says that suffering is due to freewill given to humans is rejected by him responding that there is no human involvement in earthquakes, floods and other natural disasters. Another approach which believes that suffering is ultimately redemptive phenomena and brings benefit with it, is rejected by him claiming that most of the times there is not at all any benefit in suffering, rather it becomes full of misery.<sup>127</sup> Others argue that suffering is a test to check faithfulness of people is rejected on the basis of severe miseries which cannot be logically justified as I have mentioned earlier.**

**He concludes that there is no answer to problem of suffering because all answers are unsatisfactory. The only answer is that it is a mystery and God is not to be questioned and reasons for suffering are not to be sought. He further states that: "He is, after all,**

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<sup>127</sup>Debate between Bart D. Ehrman and Richard G. Swinburn on The problem of evil.  
([www.youtube.com/the problem of evil](http://www.youtube.com/the problem of evil))

God. Why should he have to answer to anybody? Who are we, mere mortals, to question GOD?"<sup>128</sup>

Moreover, In the Bible humans are said to be made In the Image of God and they are to be like him In how they treat others? Then why they are unable to judge the painful acts of God through human standards. Subsequently he states: "I resonate with the view that suffering is a mystery and cannot be understood, but I don't think that we have no right to ask about the answer to the mystery just because we are creations and God is Almighty creator".<sup>129</sup>

The most common response by contemporary apologetic scholars to suffering is that God is like a heavenly father, and he allows suffering to build our character or to teach us how to live. In view of Dr. Bart, this approach makes sense only if suffering is not so severe. Which kind of father is the God if he harms, tortures, wounds and kills his children to maintain the discipline or to teach them lesson? We do not consider any human as father who starves his child to death because of doing something wrong so how can we imagine the heavenly father worst then that?

After dealing with problem of suffering, Bart D. Ehrman had gone through the experience of "Deconversion" which forced him to revert from being an intransigent and committed evangelical Christian to being an agnostic who considered the New Testament as a book formed completely by humans and who viewed the problem of theodicy as beyond human's ability to answer. He states in his book "I don't know if there is a God. I don't call myself an atheist, because to declare affirmatively that there is no God takes far more knowledge than I have".

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<sup>128</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *God's problem*, p. 188.

<sup>129</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *God's problem*, p. 275.

Later on he further states "I no more believe in a God who is actively involved with the problems of this world. But I used to believe in a God of that sort with all my heart and soul before Deconversion to agnosticism".<sup>130</sup>

He viewed all biblical approaches to suffering from mere logical perspective and tried to resolve it. In my point of view, mere analytical or logical approach to resolve this issue cannot work, Instead we have to involve divine guidance to justify it by combining all approaches together as I will analyze in final chapter.

## **2. D. 1. Resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him)**

The resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him) that he was raised on the third day after his death by crucifixion as claimed by New Testament is one of the major beliefs of Christian world which is also linked to the concept of atonement. Bart D. Ehrman evaluates this belief by applying textual as well as historical critical approach. As he considers himself historian after deconversion to agnosticism, he rejects resurrection arguing that historian's job is to "postdict" any event on the basis of historical evidences, while the resurrection was not the historical event; Instead it was a miracle which cannot be proved through historical evidences.

During a debate with Mike Licona, Dr. Bart states that it is beyond the rules of historians to prove any miracle (resurrection) because by the nature of their job, they cannot establish the occurrence of any miracle.

Mike Licona proves the resurrection through three evidences. First is the death of Jesus (Peace be upon him) through crucifixion, because without death we cannot imagine resurrection. The second is his appearance to many of his disciples individually or in groups and the third is his appearance to Paul.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Ibid, pp. 126-128.

<sup>131</sup>Debate between Mike Licona and Bart Ehrman on Biblical evidence for Jesus resurrection. ([www.youtube.com/Biblical\\_evidence\\_for\\_Jesus\\_resurrection](http://www.youtube.com/Biblical_evidence_for_Jesus_resurrection))

Dr. Bart answers that these are not three; rather It is only one evidence, because the death of Jesus (Peace be upon him) is not the historical evidence since it is obvious that everyone has to die. The second and third are same because many people claimed after death of Jesus that he appeared to them including Paul. So there is only one evidence for resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and that is resurrection accounts in New Testament which are full of discrepancies. Before going in details, I need to emphasize on the point which is highlighted by Bart D. Ehrman that death of Jesus (Peace be upon him) is not historical evidence because it is agreed upon fact that everyone has to die and therefore Jesus (Peace be upon him) also died, the dispute of historians is on the crucifixion because crucifixion accounts in Gospels vary each other. I disagree with the point of Bart D. Ehrman because Muslim Historians do not agree on the death of Jesus (Peace be upon him), Instead they claim the survival of Jesus (Peace be upon him) through crucifixion. So it is important to establish first the death in order to prove resurrection.

We find various accounts about death of Jesus (Peace be upon him) in Gospels but all contradict each other. In Gospel of Mark, we find account of his travel to Jerusalem for Passover feast<sup>132</sup> in which it tells us that on the day of preparation for Passover, disciples ask him about the food, and then Jesus (Peace be upon him) takes the bread and says "this is my body" and then takes the cup and says "this is my blood". It is a long story which tells us that this happened on the day of preparation for Passover in which they used to slaughter the lambs. This chapter tells the story of his betrayal and how he spent night in jail and in next chapter we find the time of his crucifixion as it states "And it was the third hour when they crucified Him".<sup>133</sup> It shows that he was crucified on the day of Passover at nine o'clock whereas the conversation with disciples about the food was on the day of preparation for Passover which is before the

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<sup>132</sup>Mark 14:12-25.

<sup>133</sup>Mark 15:25.

Passover day because in traditional Judaism the new day begins at nightfall, with the evening<sup>134</sup> as we have in Islam.

The same story has been found in Gospel of John with some differences. Here John tells us that when Jesus (Peace be upon him) went to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover feast, the disciples did not ask about the preparation of food for Passover, instead he washes disciples feet<sup>135</sup> and this is only found in Gospel of John. Then he was betrayed and condemned to be crucified, the striking thing here is that John tells the different time for crucifixion as it says "Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour"<sup>136</sup>. The sixth hour means that it was noon of the day before Passover, because it mentions that it was the day for preparation of Passover. What was the actual day and time for Jesus's (Peace be upon him) crucifixion? Mark states that it was Passover day at morning, whereas John tells that it was day of the preparation of Passover. Only one of both accounts is correct, but which one? We don't have any evidence. Due to this discrepancy, both accounts become unreliable and cannot be used as evidence for death of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

Bart D. Ehrman has analyzed the reason behind this discrepancy. He states that John changed the day and time for death of Jesus (Peace be upon him) because he believed that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was the Passover lamb whose sacrifice will bring the salvation as he states in his Gospel "The next day he saw Jesus coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"<sup>137</sup> and therefore Jesus (Peace be upon him) had to die on the day and time when the Passover lamb were being actually slaughtered which was the day before Passover at afternoon.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>134</sup>Bart D Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, p. 25.

<sup>135</sup>John 13:1-20.

<sup>136</sup>John 19:14.

<sup>137</sup>John 1:29.

<sup>138</sup>Bart D Ehrman, *Jesus Interrupted*, p. 65.

In the same way, we can analyze the resurrection accounts in Gospels. If we read resurrection accounts horizontally, we find many differences and discrepancies. All four Gospels agree that after crucifixion of Jesus (Peace be upon him) on third day, Mary went to his tomb and found it empty, but the details of this story have been presented completely different in all four Gospels. For example, who went to tomb on the third day, John says it was Mary alone<sup>139</sup>, Matthew states that it was Mary Magdalene and other Mary<sup>140</sup>, Mark mentions that it was Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome<sup>141</sup> so they were three, not two and Luke tells that they were women who accompanied Jesus from Galilee.<sup>142</sup> So all four Gospels disagree on this point.

Moving forward, we find difference on when they entered the tomb, what did they see there? Matthew says that they saw an angel there<sup>143</sup>, Mark states it was a young man<sup>144</sup> and Luke mentions that they found two men there<sup>145</sup>. So all disagree. And what they were told, all gospels present different view. Mark states that they were told to tell disciples to go to Galilee where Jesus will meet them<sup>146</sup> whereas Luke tells that they were told to remember what Jesus (Peace be upon him) had told them that he will die and rise again<sup>147</sup>. Did the women tell about what they saw or heard as Matthew states that after they left the tomb, they told disciples about it<sup>148</sup> whereas Mark tells that they did not tell anybody anything for they were afraid.<sup>149</sup> In short, the story about resurrection is full of contradictions in Gospels and at least on virtually every issue they

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<sup>139</sup> John 20:1.

<sup>140</sup> Matthew 28:1.

<sup>141</sup> Mark 16:1.

<sup>142</sup> Luke 23:55.

<sup>143</sup> Matthew 28:5.

<sup>144</sup> Mark 16:5.

<sup>145</sup> Luke 24:4.

<sup>146</sup> Mark 16:7.

<sup>147</sup> Luke 24:7.

<sup>148</sup> Matthew 28:8.

<sup>149</sup> Mark 16:8.

contradict each other. Therefore Gospel accounts cannot be used as historical evidences for the resurrection of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

## **2. D. 2. Approach of Bart D. Ehrman**

Dr. Bart has analyzed the belief of resurrection on the basis of textual and historical critical approach. He has evaluated the resurrection accounts by comparing these horizontally. He concludes that there are lots of discrepancies among resurrection accounts which make all accounts unreliable. He further argues that the concept of resurrection is biased belief because only Christian historians believe it. Otherwise it is beyond the ability of historians to prove any miracle through historiographical analysis. For Christian historians, it is more a matter of faith than a historical event.

Taking this approach forward, I disagree with Bart D. Ehrman on the point of Jesus (Peace be upon him) so called death. He urged during a debate with Mike Licona that Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death cannot be presented as evidence for his resurrection, since it is natural that everyone has to die and therefore Jesus (Peace be upon him) also died<sup>150</sup>. It seems logical but it cannot be used as historical evidence. I have mentioned in first chapter that Bart considers himself historian and evaluates everything on historical evidences. The so called death of Jesus (Peace be upon him) is also to be evaluated on historical evidences.

I have mentioned above some accounts of Jesus (Peace be upon him) death found in the Gospels and explored that there are discrepancies in day and time of crucifixion which leads to unreliability of these accounts.

We find other differences as well in accounts of Jesus (Peace be upon him) death in Gospels. In Gospel of Mark, we find that before crucifixion, Jesus (Peace be upon him) remained silent and said nothing until the very end when he says "My God, my God,

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<sup>150</sup>Debate between Mike Licona and Bart Ehrman on Biblical evidence for Jesus resurrection.  
([www.youtube.com/Biblical\\_evidence\\_for\\_Jesus\\_resurrection](http://www.youtube.com/Biblical_evidence_for_Jesus_resurrection))



## **Section II**

### **Bart D. Ehrman's Approach to the Theology of the New Testament**

This part covers the theology of New Testament being explored by Bart D. Ehrman. I have defined doctrine and theology in the beginning and according to that definition, theology is something related to examine the nature of God, therefore I will elaborate different aspects related to personality of Jesus (Peace be upon him) being explored by Bart D. Ehrman since Christianity today has become the religion about Jesus (Peace be upon him) instead of religion of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and therefore we find more emphasize on the belief of divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) through the concept of trinity. My focus in this part is on the evolution of the belief of divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) throughout the Christian history. I will start by discussing the historical existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him) because Bart D. Ehrman explored this issue in detail. Then I will move to the evolution of belief about divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and finally I will conclude with the concept of trinity as examined by Bart D. Ehrman.

#### **2. E. 1. Historical Existence of Jesus's (Peace be upon him)**

It is very obvious that Jesus (Peace be upon him) existed but Bart D. Ehrman started thinking on this topic when he received three or four e-mails every week questioning whether Jesus (Peace be upon him) existed as a human being or not? He did not take this question seriously because he thought that it is very clear, of course Jesus (Peace be upon him) existed and ignored all emails. But the questions kept coming and he began to astonish why are so many people asking?

His amazement increased when he came to know that his self was being quoted in some groups (actually misquoted rather) claiming that Jesus (Peace be upon him) never existed. Then he decided to look into the matter and he discovered huge amount of literature devoted to the query of whether Jesus (Peace be upon him) really existed

as a man or not. He was shocked because for thirty years he has been writing extensively on the historical Jesus (Peace be upon him), the development of early Christian movements, the Gospels and the history of the church's first three hundred years. But he was completely unaware of this form of skeptical literature. The people who produce such skeptical literature are known as "Mythicists" who believe that Jesus (Peace be upon him) is not an actual figure in history, rather he is a myth.

The term "Myth" means a story which did not happen actually. In this sense, according to Mythicists Jesus (Peace be upon him) is a myth and he did not exist ever even though there are enough early stories about him but all these are not historical. His teachings and life were invented by early storytellers.

Bart D. Ehrman does not have keen interest in this matter because this issue does not harm his beliefs since he is not a Christian rather he is an Agnostic, but he is an upright historian who believes on everything which is historically proven as he mentions in his book "I am not a Christian, and I have no interest in promoting a Christian cause or a Christian agenda. I am an agnostic with atheist leanings, and my life and views of the world would be approximately the same whether or not Jesus (Peace be upon him) existed. My beliefs would vary little. The answer to the question of Jesus (Peace be upon him)'s historical existence will not make me more or less happy, content, hopeful, likable, rich, famous or immortal. But as a historian I think evidence matters and every historical person, event or phenomenon needs to be established. The historian can take nothing for granted."<sup>153</sup>

So he has recorded many video lectures on this topic and has written many books on existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him) including his New York Times bestsellers book "Did Jesus (Peace be upon him) Exist".

## **2. E. 2.        Emergence of Mythical Jesus (Peace be upon him)**

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<sup>153</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus Exist*, (New York: Harper Collins publisher, 2012), p. 6.

Historians have different views about Jesus (Peace be upon him); some scholars have maintained position that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was a political leader who sought to stimulate the masses against Roman overlords. Others have claimed that he was a philosopher who taught people how to live simply apart from the materialistic things. Others have asserted that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was mainly interested in the economic plight of his oppressed people and urged socioeconomic reform. Despite this massive range of opinion, nearly all scholars of antiquity agree on the historical existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him) except Mythicists.

Earl Doherty, one of the leading advocates of Jesus (Peace be upon him) mythicism, defines the view as: "the theory that no historical Jesus (Peace be upon him) worthy of the name existed, that Christianity began with a belief in a spiritual, mythical figure, that the Gospels are essentially allegory and fiction, and that no single identifiable person lays at the root of the Galilean preaching tradition"<sup>154</sup>. In simple words the historical Jesus (Peace be upon him) did not exist.

In 1999, D. M. Murdock published his book "The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold". This book wanted to show that Christianity started through a myth about the sun-god Jesus (Peace be upon him) who was invented in the second century CE.

The basic argument of this book is that Jesus (Peace be upon him) is the sun-god as he mentions: "Thus the son of God is the sun of God" (which is very confusing, whether it is son or sun).<sup>155</sup>

So in Author's view Christianity emerged as an astro-theological religion in which the sun-god Jesus (Peace be upon him) was transformed into a historical Jesus (Peace be upon him).

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<sup>154</sup> Earl Doherty, *Jesus: Neither God nor Man, The Case for a Mythical Jesus*, (Ottawa: Age of Reason Publications, 2009), pp. 7-8.

<sup>155</sup> Dorothy Milne Murdock, *The Christ Conspiracy: The Greatest Story Ever Sold*, (Kempton: Adventures Unlimited, 1999), p 154.

The thorough analysis reveals that his book is filled of numerous wrong statements and factual errors. I would like to deal with these errors one by one:

D. M. Murdock says In his book:

- “Most of early Christians rejected Mark’s Gospel as canonical”.<sup>156</sup>

In reality, no body rejected Mark as Canonical; in fact every surviving Christian document accepts its canonicity. So it is just claim from author without any evidence.

- “Paul never mentions Jesus (Peace be upon him) in his ethical teachings”.<sup>157</sup>

This is totally wrong because Paul mentions Jesus (Peace be upon him) on various places.<sup>158</sup>

- “God’s Spell is the factual meaning of the word gospel as in magic, hypnosis and delusion”.<sup>159</sup>

Actually, the word gospel came from Term “god spel” which means good news, precise translation of the Greek word euaggelion<sup>160</sup>. It has nothing to do with magic.

Murdock argued that Christianity started as an astro-theological religion which is totally incorrect. The earliest people did not recognize Jesus (Peace be upon him) as a divine being at all. He was recognized to be a Jewish prophet. There is no astro-theological phenomenon related with Jesus (Peace be upon him) in any of our earliest traditions as I will examine it later on In detail.<sup>161</sup>

## **2. E. 3. Positive & Negative Arguments by Mythicists**

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<sup>156</sup> Murdock, *The Christ Conspiracy*, p. 146.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid, p. 33.

<sup>158</sup> 1 Corinthians 7:10–11, 9:14, 11:22–24.

<sup>159</sup> Murdock, *The Christ Conspiracy*, p. 45.

<sup>160</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus exist*, p. 17.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid, pp. 15–16.

Mythicists believe that Jesus (Peace be upon him) did not exist, instead he was a mythical figure because they thought that organized religion is a major problem while looking to all crusades and imposing religion to others. So they attacked firstly on religion by saying that religion has no firm historical basis and it is totally based on myths and ultimately they rejected Jesus (Peace be upon him) by saying that it was a Myth. To prove their claim, they made both negative and positive arguments against the historical existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

On the negative side, Mythicists stress that there are no reliable references to the existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him) in any non-Christian sources of the first century. Jesus (Peace be upon him) lived until about the year 30 CE, but no Roman or Greek author mentions him for over eighty years after that. If Jesus (Peace be upon him) was such an important person, there should be a reference to him in some of our many surviving sources of the first century?

To answer this question we can say that one reference still survives of the first century which is Philavius Josephus's book "Antiquities of Jews". Josephus is first century Jewish historian who wrote this book in 20 volumes, in which he covers history of Jews from Adam and Eve (Peace be upon them) to his own day. He mentions Jesus (Peace be upon him) in this book twice which proves the existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him).<sup>162</sup>

Mythicists claim that these two references to Jesus (Peace be upon him) in Josephus's book were not written originally by Josephus but were inserted into his writings by later Christian scribes.

So (according to Mythicists) Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are our only real sources for knowing about the historical Jesus (Peace be upon him), which are highly problematic as historical documents, because they were written at the end of the first

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<sup>162</sup>Video lecture on did Jesus exist with Unbelievable. ([www.youtube.com/didJesusexist](http://www.youtube.com/didJesusexist))

century, almost four or five decades after Jesus (Peace be upon him) lived. If he really did live, why we do not have some earlier sources?

Moreover, these four Gospels are full of contradictions and discrepancies and so are completely unreliable. So there is no reliable source from first century which proves the existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

On the positive side Mythicists say, that the stories about Jesus (Peace be upon him) are similar to the myths about pagan gods and other divine men discussed in the ancient world such as Heracles, Osiris, Mithras, Attis, Adonis and Dionysus, who were said to have been born on December 25 to a virgin mother, to have done miraculous deeds for the sake of others, to have died and been raised from the dead and later departed to live in the divine realm and so the myth about Jesus (Peace be upon him) is derived from pagan dying and rising Gods. So their view is that "The story of Jesus (Peace be upon him) is not the biography of any historical person who really existed, Instead it is a myth based on persistent Pagan stories".<sup>163</sup>

It is surprising that while claiming these arguments, Mythicists do not provide any evidence for their claims concerning the standard mythology. They do not mention any source which can be checked. They have not even cited the available evidence. So it is claim without any evidence which is unacceptable at all in scholarship.

## **2. E. 4. Historical approach to the existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him)**

Before giving any evidence for the historical existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him), one thing needs to be established. The Historical evidence is very different from scientific evidence. Since we have no direct access to the past so once something happens, it is over and done with. There is no way to repeat a past event all over again.

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<sup>163</sup> Timothy Freke, Peter Gandy, *The Jesus Mysteries: Was the Original Jesus a Pagan God*, (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1999), p. 2.

This makes historical evidence different from the varieties of evidence used in the sciences. In science we can repeat an experiment. Once an experiment is repeated adequately with the same results, a kind of predictive probability is established that the same results will obtain if the experiment is conducted one more time.

With history we are unable to repeat an event once it happens. All we can do is to give enough evidence to convince sufficient people about a certain historical claim.

So the way historians prove their evidence is totally different from the way scientists do. Historians “postdict,” which means that they indicate what probably happened in the past based on their knowledge of evidence. While scientists “predict” with almost certain reliability that what will happen is based on their knowledge of certain experiment which can be repeated.<sup>164</sup> Bart D. Ehrman considers himself historian and therefore he used “postdictive” approach in all his books and debates to prove historical existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

Historians look to variant kinds of evidence to prove past existence of a person. First, they prefer physical evidence for example, photographs.

Secondly they look for surviving products that can be traced back to the person. This might include things like houses, buildings, diaries etc.

Lastly, historians look to evidences which are about the person which includes reference to, quotations of and discussions about the person by others.

For the last kind of evidence, historians prefer to have lots of written sources, not just one or two. Historians also prefer to have sources that are quite near the date of the person or event that they are defining. As time goes on, things do indeed get changed, so it is much better to have near contemporary accounts. Historians also like these various and early sources to be extensive in scope. If all are mere mention of a person's name in sources, that is not as good as having long and extensive stories told.

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<sup>164</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus exist*, p. 27.

Moreover, the various sources should corroborate with each other, at least in major points if not in all the details. With this, it is important that various sources should be independent of one another and do not rely on each other for all of their information.<sup>165</sup> Being a historian, Bart D. Ehrman rejected Mythicists' approach on the basis of historical arguments. I will analyze all kinds of arguments one by one.

First of all, we do not have any physical evidence (photograph) for Jesus (Peace be upon him) because he existed eighteen hundred years before photography was invented.

Secondly, we also do not have any archaeological evidence of any kind. But this does not prove that he did not exist since there is no archaeological evidence for anyone else who lived in Palestine in Jesus's (Peace be upon him) day except for the very upper class elite aristocrats, who are rarely mentioned in inscriptions.

We also do not have any writings from Jesus (Peace be upon him) because literacy rates were too low in ancient times. The majority of people in the ancient world were unable to write. There are debates about Jesus's (Peace be upon him) literacy, if of course he lived. But even if he was able to read, there is no reference to any of his writings in any of our Gospels.<sup>166</sup>

Coming to the last kind of evidence which is reference to, quotations of and discussions about the Jesus (Peace be upon him), we find that Mythicists claim that no Greek or Roman author from the first century mentions Jesus (Peace be upon him) which proves that he did not exist as I have mentioned earlier. It is true, but it is a fact that some sources do not mention many millions of people who actually lived in the first century, does it mean that they also did not exist. Even we do not know much about the reign of Pontius Pilate who was governor of Judea and ruled for ten years, between 26 and 36 CE. Very limited information about him is available. If we talk about his writings, we

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<sup>165</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus exist*, p. 29.

<sup>166</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus exist*, p. 31.



do not have a single word from him.<sup>167</sup> Does that mean he did not exist? No he really existed even though, like Jesus (Peace be upon him), we have no records from his day or writings from his hand.

If we talk about the Canonical Gospels which are considered to be eyewitness reports, we have reference to Jesus (Peace be upon him) by anyone who was a contemporary eyewitness which ultimately proves his existence. But it is not that simple, according to Bart D. Ehrman, these Gospels are not eyewitness reports, because none of the Gospel writers ever identifies himself by name or narrates any of his stories about Jesus (Peace be upon him) in the first person. Instead they describe the disciples in the third person, talking about what "they" did (not what "I" or "we" did). Even more important point to notice is that the immediate followers of Jesus (Peace be upon him) were lower class Aramaic speaking peasants from rural Galilee. Can we expect from them to write complete book in Greek?

Scholars are engaged to conduct studies on literacy rate in ancient world. Columbian professor William Harris in his book "Ancient Literacy" demonstrates the low literacy rates in antiquity. Author draws the conclusion that only about 10 percent of the population could read at all in the very best times. And those 10 percent were the upper class elite people who had the money, time and leisure to afford an education.<sup>168</sup> This is not an appropriate description of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) disciples. They were not upper class aristocrats as he was himself.

One more thing needs attention here is that the native language of Jesus (Peace be upon him), his disciples and most people in Palestine was Aramaic.<sup>169</sup> But the Gospels were not written in Aramaic but in very good Greek which shows that the authors of Gospels were well educated speakers and writers of Greek language which indicates

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid, pp. 33-34.

<sup>168</sup> William Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 86

<sup>169</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus exist*, p. 36.

their belongingness to relatively higher classes which is opposite to the description of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) disciples.

Scholars date these Greek compositions to the end of the first century, with Mark probably being the first Gospel, written around 70 CE, Matthew and Luke being a bit later, written around 80–85 CE and John being last, around 90–95 CE. The authors of these books were not the original followers of Jesus (Peace be upon him). They were later Christians who had heard stories about Jesus (Peace be upon him) as these stories were circulated year after year and finally decided to write these down. So these accounts do not remain reliable to prove the existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him). One historical evidence which is widely discussed by contemporary scholars is Flavius Josephus<sup>170</sup>.

Flavius Josephus is very important figure of antiquity. His historical writings are our primary source of information about the history and life of Palestine in the first century. Before he was an author he became actively involved in the political and military affairs of Jews in Palestine.<sup>171</sup>

He had written (around 93 CE) a twenty volume account of the history of Jewish people from the beginning till his own day, known as "The Antiquities of the Jews". He mentions Jesus (Peace be upon him) twice in this book.

The one of these two accounts is very short and comes in Book 20 of the Antiquities. Here Josephus referred to an incident that happened in 62 CE, when Ananus who was the local religious leader in Jerusalem misused his power and illegally put to death a man named James, whom Josephus identified as "the brother of Jesus, who is called the messiah".<sup>172</sup> Here Jesus (Peace be upon him) is actually called by name.

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<sup>170</sup>Video lecture on Did Jesus Exist with Unbelievable. ([www.youtube.com/did-jesus-exist](http://www.youtube.com/did-jesus-exist))

<sup>171</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus exist*, p. 43.

<sup>172</sup>Ralph Marcus (tr.), *The Flavius Josephus* [Flavius Josephus, *The Antiquities of Jews*], Vol 9, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1943), p. 1.

The second one is more debatable. This passage is called the “Testimonium Flavianum” because this is the testimony to the life of Jesus (Peace be upon him) given by Flavius Josephus.<sup>173</sup> It is the longest reference to Jesus (Peace be upon him) so far. Testimonium Flavianum reads as follows:

At this time there appeared Jesus (Peace be upon him), a wise man. For he was a doer of startling deeds, a teacher of people who receive the truth with pleasure. And he gained a following both among many Jews and among many of Greek origin. He was the messiah. And when Pilate, because of an accusation made by the leading men among us, condemned him to the cross, those who had loved him previously did not cease to do so. For he appeared to them on the third day, living again, just as the divine prophets had spoken of these and countless other wondrous things about him. And up until this very day the tribe of Christians, named after him, has not died out.<sup>174</sup> So we have evidence for Jesus (Peace be upon him) from the first century Jewish writing.

## **2. E. 5.      Analysis to Historical and Mythical approaches**

The passage quoted by historians and Bart D. Ehrman as well in the writings of Josephus needs to be evaluated. There is lot of debate by scholars on this passage, Josephus was thoroughly Jewish and never converted to Christianity. But this passage contains comments that only a Christian could make. Most scholars argue that there is simply no way Josephus the Jew could have written such things. So how did these comments get into his writings?

It needs to be remembered that Josephus was not a beloved author among his people and even now he is not considered to be a good man, instead he was considered traitor among Jews and for that reason his writings were transmitted not by Jews but by Christians. When Christian scribes copied the text, they added a few words

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<sup>173</sup> John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Reconsidering the Historical Jesus*, (New York: Doubleday, 1999), pp. 59–69

<sup>174</sup> Ralph Marcus (tr.), *The Antiquities of Jews*, Vol 18, p. 3.

according to their desires to make sure that the reader would get the point that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was the superhuman messiah raised from the dead as the scriptures predicted. Ultimately Testimonium Flavianum became interpolated. One more reason is that Josephus did not know Jesus (Peace be upon him) because he was born after Jesus's (Peace be upon him) ascension to heaven. He got second hand information about Jesus (Peace be upon him) and transmitted, and whenever we get lot of second hand information about someone who lived back in ancient times, it becomes changed. So the same way Josephus's Testimonium Flavianum got changed<sup>175</sup> and therefore this passage cannot be used as evidence for Jesus's (Peace be upon him) existence.

Despite the problems in accounts mentioned above, we cannot deny the historical existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him) since we have sufficient number of accounts about his existence. We have four Gospels which date back to first century. Then we have "Testimonium Flavianum" which is independent account. Moreover, we find Jesus (Peace be upon him) in Paul's writings as well. Paul designates that Jesus (Peace be upon him) really was born as a human and he was a Jew. So he states: "But when the fullness of time came, God sent his son, born from a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem those who were under the law".<sup>176</sup> By "men under the law" he meant Jews.<sup>177</sup> In many other letters, he mentioned him as well<sup>178</sup>. So we have enough of the ancient sources which mention Jesus (Peace be upon him) and these all corroborate each other without collaboration. Therefore we can establish historical existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

## 2. E. 6. Jesus (Peace be upon him) as a Dying and Rising God

<sup>175</sup>Video lecture on Did Jesus Exist with Unbelievable. ([www.youtube.com/did-jesus-exist](http://www.youtube.com/did-jesus-exist))

<sup>176</sup>Galatians 4: 4-18.

<sup>177</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *Did Jesus exist*, p. 87.

<sup>178</sup>1 Corinthians 15: 3-4, 1 Corinthians 2:2, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

Many Mythicist claim that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was an invention of the early widespread notion of dying and rising god as it was common in pagan religions of antiquity as I have mentioned earlier in positive argument of Mythicists. The concept behind this claim is that people in ancient religions used to worship gods who died and rose again like Osiris, Attis, Adonis, Tammuz, Heracles and many others. Actually these gods were associated with vegetation and they were worshipped in fertility cults. Every year when the crops die in winter these gods also die and go to the underworld and come back to life in the spring with crops and reappear on earth. So they were worshipped as dying-rising deities in ancient times<sup>179</sup>.

According to this view, Jesus (Peace be upon him) was the Jewish version of the pagan fertility deity, invented by Jews as a dying and rising god. Later people historicized his existence and claimed that he was a divine human who had once lived on earth, who had died and then rose again. So Jesus (Peace be upon him) existence was historicized from pagan myths of Dying and Rising gods.

There are two major problems in this view according to Bart D. Ehrman. First is that there are severe doubts about whether there were dying rising gods in the pagan world or not, and if there were, whether they were like the dying-rising Jesus (Peace be upon him) or something else. The second one is that Jesus (Peace be upon him) earliest followers did not actually think he was God as I will elaborate under the title of divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him). So how could Jesus (Peace be upon him) be invented as dying rising God.

Historically, there are no evidences and instances for dying and rising gods in pagan world. This idea was started in 19<sup>th</sup> century by James George Frazer in his book *The Golden Bough*. In this book Frazer claimed that Eastern Mediterranean divinities such as Osiris, Attis and Adonis were all dying and rising gods. All of them were supposed to be vegetative gods whose cycle of life, death, and resurrection repeats and explains

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<sup>179</sup> Video lecture on Did Jesus Exist with Unbelievable. ([www.youtube.com/did-jesus-exist](http://www.youtube.com/did-jesus-exist))

the earth's fertility. Frazer thought that Christians picked up this characterization of dying and rising gods and applied it to their myths about Jesus (Peace be upon him).<sup>180</sup>

By close observation of early Eastern Mediterranean divinities we can see that these divinities were vegetative gods which were associated with seasonal cycle of earth's fertility as Mettinger claims in his book "the world of ancient Near Eastern religions actually knew a number of deities that may be properly described as dying and rising gods and they had close ties to the seasonal cycle of plant life".<sup>181</sup> However, the case of dying and rising of Jesus (Peace be upon him) is totally different from these deities since it was onetime event which was seen as being atonement for sins whereas vegetative gods were associated with the seasonal cycle which occurred year in and year out and nothing like atonement was there in ancient Near Eastern deities.

One instance which is commonly cited by scholars as pagan parallel to Jesus (Peace be upon him) is Osiris. The most famous ancient source which discusses Osiris is the work of famous scholar of religion of the second Christian century Plutarch. In his work *Isis and Osiris*, Plutarch tells us that when Osiris was murdered, his body was dismembered and scattered, but his wife Isis went on search to recover and reassemble his body. So different people claimed and argued that his body was buried in different places and that's why they build shrines on different places on his name so he became the powerful ruler of the dead in the underworld but he did not return to life.<sup>182</sup> So there is clear distinction between Osiris and Jesus (Peace be upon him) case and we can definitely say that Jesus (Peace be upon him) resurrection is not taken by Osiris.

To conclude, we can say that both positive and negative arguments of Mythicists can be rejected on the basis of historical evidences which ultimately prove the historical existence of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

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<sup>180</sup> Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: On the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 44-56.

<sup>181</sup> Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, *The Riddle of the Resurrection: Dying and Rising Gods in the Ancient Near East*, (Stockholm: Almqvist and Wiksell International, 2001), pp. 217-219.

<sup>182</sup> Video lecture on Did Jesus Exist with Unbelievable. ([www.youtube.com/did\\_jesus\\_exist](http://www.youtube.com/did_jesus_exist))

## **2. F. 1. Divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) & Trinity**

The divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) which is commonly portrayed as trinity is the concept developed by later Christians and not found in our earliest sources. There are different Christologies about the nature of Jesus (Peace be upon him) as analyzed by Bart D. Ehrman. Some of the groups believed that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was both completely human and completely divine. Others claimed that he was not at all divine, rather completely human. Others believed that he was completely divine. These disputes affected the text of New Testament because it was time for reproduction of scripture. So every group modified the text according to his beliefs<sup>183</sup> and to make it more amendable to their own theological views and less amendable to the views of opponents. I will discuss each Christology one by one and at the end I will analyze this belief.

## **2. F. 2. Adoptionist Christology**

A group of Christians who believed that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was fully human and not divine was called adoptionist. They were named adoptionist because they maintained the view that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was full human being with flesh and blood body and was not divine, instead he was adopted to be son of God at his baptism.<sup>184</sup> This group was strict monotheist so they insisted that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was not at all divine, instead he was human being who was not different from others in nature. He was more righteous than others which made him different and due to his great righteousness, God had chosen to place him in special relationship by adopting him to be his son at his baptism.

In response to this group, proto orthodox Christians believed that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was not merely a human but he was a divine being. He was more righteous than others because he was different from others by nature. These disputes affected the text which was in circulation at that time. According to Bart D. Ehrman, there are very few

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<sup>183</sup>Richard Simon, *Critical History of the Text of the New Testament*, (London: R. Taylor, 1989), p. 65.

<sup>184</sup>*Ibid*, pp. 30-31.

readings which appear to be created by adoptionist group. The later scribes who took orthodox line altered the text to oppose adoptionist point of view and to emphasize on the divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

### **2. F. 3. Anti Adoptionist alterations of the text**

We found in Gospel of Luke while describing early life of Jesus (Peace be upon him) that when Joseph and Mary took Jesus (Peace be upon him) to temple and he was blessed by a holy man "his father and mother were marveling at what was said to him".<sup>185</sup> How Joseph was called his father if Jesus (Peace be upon him) had been born of Virgin. To avoid this problem, many scribes altered the text by saying "Joseph and his mother were marveling"<sup>186</sup>, now text claims that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was born of Virgin.

Same problem occurs few verses later in the account of travel to temple. The story tells us that when Joseph, Mary and Jesus (Peace be upon him) went to Jerusalem to attend the festival, after festival whole family went back to home except Jesus (Peace be upon him) who stayed there without informing the family as text says "his parents did not know about him". Why text mentioned his parents when Joseph was not his father. Many textual variants resolve the problem by correcting it as "Joseph and his mother did not know him". At the end of this story, after they returned to Jerusalem to find out Jesus (Peace be upon him) and three days later they found Jesus (Peace be upon him) in temple, Mary said "Your father and I have been looking for you". Scribes simply changed the text by saying "We have been looking for you".<sup>187</sup>

In gospel of John, scribes altered the text to affirm that Jesus (Peace be upon him) is to be understood as divine being and God. The first eighteen verses of gospel of John which are called prologue. In first three verses it says "in the beginning there was a word, and the

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<sup>185</sup> Luke 2:33.

<sup>186</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, p. 157.

<sup>187</sup> Video lecture on *Misquoting Jesus* by Hynes lecture series. ([www.youtube.com/MisquotingJesus](http://www.youtube.com/MisquotingJesus))



word was with God and the word was God".<sup>188</sup> This word of God made all the things and is mode of communication to the world. In later verse it says "Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us".<sup>189</sup> It means that word of God became human being. Later verse tells us that it was Jesus (Peace be upon him).<sup>190</sup>

According to this prologue, Jesus (Peace be upon him) was the Incarnation of word of God which was in the beginning God himself. The prologue ends with two variant forms "No one has seen God at any time, but the unique Son/ the unique God who is in the bosom of Father, that one has made him known".<sup>191</sup> The problem is with the identification of "unique one", whether it is "unique God" or "unique son". The reading "unique God" is found in manuscripts which are oldest and generally associated with Alexandrian family but it is rarely found in manuscripts non-associated with Alexandrian family. This indicates that it could be a textual variant created by the people of Alexandria because majority of manuscripts from everywhere else have reading "unique son".<sup>192</sup> The other reason to think that reading "unique son" is correct one because John uses this phrase on many other places<sup>193</sup> whereas he did not mention Jesus (Peace be upon him) as "unique God" anywhere else.

#### **2. F. 4. Docetists Christology**

This group stands opposite to the adoptionist theology. They believed that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was not a human being with flesh and blood, instead he was totally divine being and he only appeared as a human to feel pain, to bleed and to die for others. Since Jesus (Peace be upon him) was God according to this theology so in reality he was not a human and only appeared in human flesh. Their name "Docetists" came from Greek word *DOKEO*

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<sup>188</sup> John 1:1-3.

<sup>189</sup> John 1:14.

<sup>190</sup> John 1:17.

<sup>191</sup> John 1:18.

<sup>192</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, pp. 162-163.

<sup>193</sup> John 3:16-18.

which means 'to appear'. The best known Docetist name from the early Christianity is Marcion. Marcion had taken this theology from the Paul.

In some of the Paul's letters, we find Jewish Law and gospel of Christ two different things. Paul maintained the view that a person who has faith on gospel is right one, not the person who follows the Jewish Law. According to Marcion, this difference between gospel of Christ and Jewish law indicates that God of gospel and God of Jewish Law are different from each other which means that there are two different Gods, the God of the Old Testament created this world and gave people Jewish law and when anyone breaks the Law, he punishes him with death. Jesus (Peace be upon him) came from greater God to save people from God of Old Testament. Since he did not belong to the God who created this material world so he was himself not part of this material world which ultimately means that he was not actually born, he did not have material body and he did not actually die. All these things were just appearance. The God of Jewish Law accepted the appearance of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death as sacrifice for payment of other's sins. Whoever believes in it will be saved and will be the righteous one only.<sup>194</sup>

This Christology was rejected by proto orthodox Christians arguing that if Jesus (Peace be upon him) was not actual human being, his apparent death could not bring salvation to anyone. They took a stance that Jesus (Peace be upon him) while still divine was fully human with flesh and blood, who really died and was raised from dead. So Docetists emphasized on the full divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) whereas Orthodox stressed on humanity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) while being divine as well.

## **2. F. 5. Anti Docetic alterations of the text**

The Docetic theology influenced the scribes who transmitted the text which ultimately became New Testament. Docetic Christology emphasized on complete and full divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) by claiming his apparent body and death. Whereas proto

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<sup>194</sup>Georg Werner Kimmel, *The New Testament: The History of the Investigation of Its Problems*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 41.

orthodox Christians emphasized on the real body of Jesus (Peace be upon him) to prove the salvation brought by sacrifice of his flesh and shedding of his blood which requires real body, not apparent body.

A textual variant occurred in gospel of Luke in Jesus (Peace be upon him)'s account of last supper with his disciples. According to Bart D. Ehrman, in many oldest Greek manuscripts, we find verses in which we are told that taking a cup, giving thanks, he said: "Take this and divide it among yourselves, for I say to you that I will not drink from the fruit of the vine from now on, until the kingdom of God comes". And taking bread, giving thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying: "This is my body, but behold, the hand of the one who betrays me is with me at the table".<sup>195</sup>

In most of the modern manuscripts, there is an addition to text in which after "This is my body" Jesus (Peace be upon him) continues "which has been given for you; Do this in remembrance of me" and after taking the cup he continues "this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed for you".<sup>196</sup>

Bart D. Ehrman has examined the reason behind addition of these verses in gospel of Luke. The purpose was to emphasize that it was Jesus (Peace be upon him) broken body and shed blood that brought the salvation which requires the actual body, not the apparent one. The clue for addition of these verses is that these additions convey very different message from Luke's own understanding of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death. Luke never states that death itself brings salvation from sins, nowhere in Acts Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death is said to be "for you". In fact, on two occasions where Luke's source Mark portrays that Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death brought the salvation,<sup>197</sup> Luke changed the words simply. Luke had very distinctive understanding of the way in which Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death leads to salvation. Luke considers that Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death makes people realize of their guilt before God (because he died even though

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<sup>195</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, p. 166.

<sup>196</sup> Luke 22:19-20.

<sup>197</sup> Mark 10:45, 15:39.

he was innocent). When people recognize their guilt they turn to God in repentance and ultimately he forgives them. In this way Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death drives people to repentance and repentance brings the salvation. This understanding is totally different from understanding of Mark and other sources. This view point could not be found in disputed verses which have been mentioned earlier, instead Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death has been portrayed as atonement by saying "for you" which indicates that these verses were not originally part of Luke, instead added later on.

We have clue that disputed verse was added later on by proto orthodox scribes. In a dispute with Marcion, Tertullian mentions: "Jesus (Peace be upon him) affirmed clearly what he meant by the bread by calling the bread his own body. Likewise, by mentioning the cup and claiming the New Testament to be sealed in his blood, confirms the reality of his body, because no blood can belong to a body which is without flesh. Thus from the evidence of the flesh we got proof of the body, and we got proof of the flesh from the evidence of the blood".<sup>198</sup>

It seems that the text was altered to stress the real body and flesh of Jesus (Peace be upon him) which he sacrificed for others to prove his humanity and to counter the Docetic Christology which emphasizes on divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

## **2. F. 6. Separationists Christology**

This involved Christian group who understood Jesus (Peace be upon him) as two beings, one completely human and other completely divine. They are called separationists because they divided Jesus (Peace be upon him) into two streams, the man Jesus (Peace be upon him) who was completely human and the divine Jesus (Peace be upon him) who was fully divine.

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<sup>198</sup>Debate between James White and Bart D Ehrman on Did the Bible misquote Jesus.  
([www.youtube.com/Did the Bible misquote Jesus](http://www.youtube.com/Did the Bible misquote Jesus))

The advocates of this concept are commonly known as Gnostics. The word "Gnostic" comes from Greek word "Gnosis" which means knowledge. The term is applied to the group of Christians who emphasized on the secret knowledge for salvation. They claimed that material world is not created by God, instead it came into existence as a result of calamity in divine realm, in this disaster one divine being was excluded from heavenly places for some mysterious reason and after her fall a lesser deity created this material world and imprisoned that excluded divine being in human bodies on earth. Through the spark of this divine being, humans need to learn the truth of who they are, where they come from and where they have to go. This truth contains secret knowledge which can only be conveyed by excluded divine being. The advocates of this Christology claimed that Jesus (Peace be upon him) is divine revealer of the truth which leads to salvation. They believed that divine being came into Jesus (Peace be upon him) at his baptism, empowering him to perform miracles but at the end Christ abandoned him and left him to die on the cross alone. That is the reason why Jesus (Peace be upon him) said "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" and after Jesus's (Peace be upon him) death the divine being (Christ) raised him from the dead as a reward for his faithfulness<sup>199</sup>. According to this concept Jesus (Peace be upon him) Christ are two different beings. One is Jesus (Peace be upon him) (human being) and other is Christ (divine being).

Proto orthodox Christians rejected this because they found it offensive. They believed that material world is created by God for good purpose, not resulted from heavenly disaster and Jesus (Peace be upon him) Christ is one being, both divine and human at a time, not two separate beings.

## **2. F. 7. Anti Separationists alteration of the Text**

In gospel of Mark where Jesus's (Peace be upon him) crucifixion has been described, the story tells us that he remained silent throughout the process of crucifixion, the passersby, Jewish leaders and two criminals mocked him but he did not say single word until his

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<sup>199</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, p. 171.

death<sup>200</sup> when he cried out "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani"<sup>201</sup> which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me".<sup>202</sup>

Separationists took this as evidence to prove that at that time divine Christ departed from Jesus (Peace be upon him) and that's why he cried out "why have you forsaken me".

Some Proto-orthodox scribes changed the Mark text to avoid this separationist concept. According to Bart D. Ehrman, In several Latin manuscripts and one Greek manuscript Jesus (Peace be upon him) cries out "My God, my God, why have you mocked me". This change suits to its literary context as everyone around there mocked him. But this variant lacks in all our oldest witnesses as well as it does not match to the original Aramaic version of the text "lema sabachthani" which means "why have you forsaken me" not "why have you mocked me".<sup>203</sup>

It seems that the text was altered by proto-orthodox scribes to counter the Christology claimed by Separationists.

## **2. F. 8. Approach of Bart D. Ehrman**

Bart D. Ehrman has analyzed the concept of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) divinity combining the higher criticism and lower criticism approach. In first chapter, I have explained allegorical method which ultimately led to critical study of Bible. This method paved way to divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him). Initially in ancient times, there was no concept of Jesus (Peace be upon him) divine nature at all. It was later developed through the allegorical interpretation of Astrotheological Gods of pagan world. In antiquity, Astrotheological Gods were associated with seasonal cycle of earth's fertility who were supposed to rise in the time of fertility and die with the end of season. From

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<sup>200</sup> Debate between Craig A Evans and Bart D Ehrman on Does the New Testament misquote Jesus. ([www.youtube.com/does the New Testament misquote Jesus](http://www.youtube.com/does-the-new-testament-misquote-jesus))

<sup>201</sup> Psalms 22:1.

<sup>202</sup> Mark 15:34.

<sup>203</sup> Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, p. 171.

this pagan concept, some Christians brought the concept of Jesus (Peace be upon him) divinity.

All four gospels which are the earliest records describe Jesus (Peace be upon him) and discuss him but none of first three gospels talks about Jesus (Peace be upon him) nature (whether he was a human or divine) because it was obvious for them that he was of course a human so they described his birth and other stories of his life. Only gospel of John focuses on nature of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and his divinity but there is no clear indication at all for his divine nature.

All first three gospels portray Jesus (Peace be upon him) as a man who was very nearer and dearer to God to whom God had a special relation. So gospel of Matthew presents Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) as a king worthy of obedience. Gospel of Mark describes him as lord who serves his people in secret. Gospel of Luke elaborates him as human savior who brought good things to poor and neglected people. The only gospel which presents Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) as God is Gospel of John.

It is pertinent to highlight that on various places, gospels describe Jesus (Peace be upon him) as son of God, but it is not equal to saying him as god because this Impression was influenced by old testament writings as the gospels were written under first century context. In Old Testament writings, we find many Individuals being said son of god, for example, In Samuel 2, king of Israel was clearly said son of God<sup>204</sup> which did not make him god. This statement was used to show his special relation with god. The same impression was adopted in the case of Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him). Bart D. Ehrman has critically evaluated the evolution of divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and concluded that it was later development through the concept of trinity. We do not find even a single passage in any of the gospels related to the concept of trinity which has become the fundamental belief of Christianity today. It was developed to cater the

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<sup>204</sup>2 Samuel 7:11–14.

**oneness of God. If God is God and Jesus (Peace be upon him) is also God then there are two Gods. To maintain the oneness of God, they said that Jesus (Peace be upon him) is the Incarnation of God and not separate to him and therefore there is only one God. To prove this point, Bart D. Ehrman has applied horizontal reading approach as well as historical critical approach on the New Testament.**



## **Chapter 3**

### **Analysis of Bart D. Ehrman's approach and his influence on contemporary American Scholarship**

Going through the history of critical study of the Bible, we came to know that the initial step towards the critical study of the Bible in general and New Testament in particular was adoption of allegorical method to study the Bible. This approach led to in depth analysis and investigation of the text of New Testament. Resultantly, complex study of New Testament came into existence and deeper sense of New Testament was sought. Eventually many new things were added to original text in the name of allegorical meaning. Later on people realized that the ancient sources which were original had been altered in the name of allegories with passage of time. This attitude paved way to look back to original sources in order to confirm the authenticity of allegorical additions.

Consequently it led to the "sola scripture" movement which emphasized on the importance of solely original text. When scribes turned to mere original texts, they found it difficult to understand without the help of modern translations. So they started making it easier for the readers. This was the foundation for "reader oriented" approach which brought the trend to translate and interpret the New Testament in a manner which is more reader friendly and easily comprehensible to audience. This approach continued till today and huge variety of New Testament versions is the result of "reader oriented" approach.

In the final chapter, I will analyze the impact and influence of Bart D. Ehrman's approach on contemporary American Scholarship. Before concluding my research, I will analyze the problem of evil in the light of Islamic perspective since this problem led Dr. Bart to leave his faith. Moreover I would also elaborate divinity of Jesus as approached

**by Dr. Bart D Ehrman since Christianity has become religion about Jesus now days instead of religion of Jesus.**

## **Bart D. Ehrman and Theodicy- An Analysis**

Bart D. Ehrman has discussed in his books as well as video lectures and debates different Biblical approaches to existence of evil. He finds all approaches unsatisfactory and therefore rejects all of these. In final part of this chapter, I will analyze all Bible approaches mentioned by Bart D. Ehrman in the light of Qur'an and Islamic teachings.

### **3. A. 1. Free will of humans**

The first approach rejected by Bart D. Ehrman is that God created everything good but evil exists due to free will of humans when by using their free will they violate the rules of God and behave in a way which is contrary to divine plan. It has been clearly mentioned in the Qur'an that there is a purpose for creation of this world and humans are to behave in a way to fulfill that purpose. The Holy Qur'an states:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا طَائِلًا ذَلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ آلِ قَارُونَ (38:27)

Therefore humans are to make serious efforts to live according to divine plan. If they will neglect that purpose and the responsibilities that it entails, they will create problems and evil in the world.

Bart D. Ehrman rejected this approach by arguing that there is no human involvement in natural disasters like earthquakes and floods etc which is also part of evil so how evil is the result of human freewill. Furthermore he argues that freewill will be given by Almighty God to humans in Heaven with the sense to use it only in positive way, so why he did not give the same sense to humans in this world to eradicate evil and suffering.

The Holy Qur'an gives the answer to both of the arguments. Allah Almighty states in the Qur'an:

قُلْ هِيَ السَّاعَةُ الَّتِي كُنْتُمْ تُكَذِّبُونَ أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنِّي خَلَقْتُكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ ثُمَّ جَعَلْتُكُمْ فِرَقًا وَإِنِّي مُرْجِعُكُمْ إِلَيَّ وَإِنِّي مُخْرِجُكُمْ مِنْهَا مَرَّةً أُخْرَى (30:41)

This ayah declares that what so ever happens in the world is the result of human actions. Whenever humans do not behave in accordance with the divine law individually, they face difficulty or problem individually, and whenever they misbehave collectively, they face such things i.e. earthquakes and floods collectively.

It is important to mention that Islamic tradition does not always present natural disaster and fatal illness as punishment; rather these are seen as hope and forgiveness as well.

Therefore the Last and Chief of all the Prophets of Allah, Muhammad (Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon) encouraged visiting the sick as Hadith says:

أَطْعِمُوا الْجَائِعَ، وَعَلِّمُوا الْتَرِيدَ، وَكُفُّوا الْحَاجَةَ<sup>205</sup>

There are many *Ahadith* which reflect to this issue and elaborate that sickness and natural disasters are a kind of purification which leads to eternal bliss in heaven. The Last and Chief of all the Prophets of Allah, Muhammad (Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon) said that:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ قَالَ "الْمُهَيَّجَةُ وَالْمَخْمُوسَةُ وَالْمَطْمُونَةُ وَالْمَقْرَبَةُ وَالْمُتَغَرَّبَةُ وَالْمُتَغَرَّبَةُ فِي سَبِيلِ

اللَّهُ<sup>206</sup>

In above mentioned Hadith, it is stated that five types of death are considered martyrdom as it translates "There are five martyrs: Those who die of the plague, being crushed, stomach illness, drowning and the martyr in the cause of Allah". This Hadith declares that if a believer dies as result of being drown in flood or being crushed by a building in earthquake, they would be considered people of paradise because of

<sup>205</sup> Iqbal Shah Gilani (tr.), *Sahih Ul Bukhari* [Muhammad bin Ismail, *Sahih Ul Bukhari*], Vol 3, (Lahore: Zia Ul Quran Publications, 4<sup>th</sup> ed, 2014), p. 294.

<sup>206</sup> Muhammad Ayub, Malik Abdul Razzaq (tr.), *Jamal Ul Tirmizi* [Muhammad bin Isa, *Jamal Ul Tirmizi*], Vol 1, (Lahore: Zia Ul Quran Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2013), p. 571.

martyrdom. So there is hope and mercy in natural disasters as well in Islamic tradition while declaring that all incidents (natural disasters) happen due to human violence of natural or moral laws as stated in Qur'an.

The second objection raised by Bart D. Ehrman is that God will give freewill to humans in heaven with the sense to use it only in positive way so why he did not give the same sense to humans in the world to avoid evil. The answer has been addressed in the Holy Qur'an as it says:

الَّذِينَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ فَلْيَعْلَمُوا كَمْ أَتَيْنَاهُمْ بِأَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا وَلَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ الْكَافُورُ (67:2)

This Ayah clarifies that this worldly life is a test and humans have been given freewill to check them how do they use it, in good way or in bad way. This world is a test and whosoever will pass it (by using freewill in positive way) will be rewarded with heaven in life hereafter. The word "أَحْسَنُ" is a superlative form which means "the best" and indicates that freewill of humans may be used positively and negatively in this world.

### 3. A. 2. Suffering as a Punishment of Sin or Trial

The approach which claims that evil or suffering exists as punishment of human sins or as a trail to check the faithfulness of believers has been rejected by Bart D. Ehrman arguing that birth defects, massive starvation and severe miseries are neither punishment of sins, nor test to check the faithfulness of his creatures because it is totally illogical that all powerful and all merciful God gives punishment or trails his creatures in a way which is beyond their capacity.

This argument has been addressed in Holy Qur'an on various places. Almighty Allah says:

أَمْ عِندَهُمْ أَنْ يَكُنْ لَهُمُ الْخُلُقُ وَتَأْتِيَهُمْ قُلُوبُ الَّذِينَ خَلَقُوا مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ عَشَقَهُمُ الْفِتْرَةُ أَمْ لَوْ لَوْ عَظِي تَكُونُ الرُّسُلُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا

نَعَصَرَ اللَّهُ الْآلِينَ نَعَصَرَ اللَّهُ قُرْبَهُ (2:214) نَعَصَرَ عَلَى

The Ayah states that hardships and sufferings are to be faced as test and eventually it is the avenue to achieve eternal bliss in heaven. The Prophets who came before and their people also confronted pains and hardships and shaken very harshly. Another ayah defines the types of tests so it says:

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِفَقْرٍ وَفُجَاءٍ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ وَفُجَاءٍ مِّنَ الْحَيَاةِ وَالْمَوْتِ وَفُجَاءٍ مِّنَ الْمَوْتِ وَالْحَيَاةِ وَالْمَوْتِ وَالْحَيَاةِ وَالْمَوْتِ (2:155)

This Ayah responds to Bart D. Ehrman's argument that massive starvation cannot be punishment or test and he supports his argument by presenting the example of Prophet Ayyub (Job) that he was innocent but God took all his wealth, health and children and when he remained faithful to Almighty God, God rewarded him with more children which seems that children may be replaced like DVD player which is totally unjustified.

The above mentioned Ayah answers this query that believers may be tested with starvation, loss of health, wealth and children. Since this world has been created to distinguish the good ones from the bad one, therefore there will be tests and trials so that good people may be rewarded and bad ones may be punished in hereafter. Another ayah elaborates this in other words as it says:

أَحْسِبُ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُلَاقُوا رَبَّهُمْ وَلَا يَتَذَكَّرُونَ

وَلَقَدْ كُنَّا الْإِنسَانَ مِن تَابِعِهِمْ لَنَبْلُوَهُمْ وَلَنَعْلَمَنَّهُ الْإِنسَانَ مِمَّنْ صَدَقَ وَأَمَّنْ كَذَبَ (29:2-3)

This Ayah indicates that purpose of all tests is to discriminate the true believers from non-believers. The Last and Chief of all the Prophets of Allah, Muhammad (Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon) declares in Hadith that sufferings and tests are signs of God's love and therefore God's beloved ones (prophets) faced lot of pain and sufferings as Hadith quotes:

عَنْ سَعْدِ بْنِ أَبِي وَحْاشٍ قَالَ لَمَّا تَابَعَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ أَهْلَ الْقُبَا قَالَ "الْأَهْلَاءُ لَهُ الْأَعْمَلُ وَالْأَعْمَلُ لَهُ الْفَضْلُ فَتَعْلَمُونَ عَلَى حَسَبِ رُؤُوسِهِمْ كَأَنِّي

يَوْمَ هَلْجَا لُحُوتٌ بَلَاغٌ لَكُمْ أَن كَانَ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْمُتْلَى عَلَى عَسَبٍ رُبُوبٍ لَمَّا كَرِهَ الْإِبْرَاهِيمَ الْإِلَهَ مَا كَانَ الْإِبْرَاهِيمَ عَلَى بِلَاغَةٍ تَجَنَّبُ عَلَى الْأُمَمِ ذِينَ عَابَهُ إِنَّ

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**This Hadith tells that the closest to God (prophets) faced extreme difficulties, than whoever is close to them and so on. It illustrates that problems and sufferings are signs of God's love and that is why he examines his beloved ones through tests and sufferings. It has been mentioned in Qur'an as well that no one is hampered beyond his capacity so Allah Almighty states:**

لا يترك الله ثقباً إلا ووسعها (2:286)

**In this ayah, Allah Almighty who knows us better than ourselves tells us that everyone is tested according to his capacity and no one is burdened beyond his limits.**

### 3. A. 3. Bart D. Ehrman's view to Redemptive Suffering

**The approach which claims that suffering may be redemptive and ultimately brings benefit has been rejected by Bart D. Ehrman arguing that most of the times, suffering is full of misery and pain, and there is not at all any benefit in suffering.**

**The answer to this objection is very clearly mentioned in the Glorious Qur'an. Allah Almighty says:**

قُلْ إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا (5 94)

<sup>207</sup> Muhammad Khan (tr.), *Sahih Ul Muslim* [Muslim bin Hajja], *Sahih Ul Muslim*, Vol 3, (Lahore: Zia Ul Quran Publications, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2013), p. 660.

The Ayah declares that with every difficulty, there is comfort. The Last and Chief of all the Prophets of Allah, Muhammad (Blessings and Peace of Allah be upon) elaborated this in much detailed way so he stated while describing the sufferings and pain in this world that if a believer suffered whole of his life and remained faithful to God, he will be awarded with eternal bliss and upon that reward all sufferings will be forgotten forever:

قال رسول الله، صلى الله عليه وسلم: "نُفَقَى بِأَنْعَمَ أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا مِنْ أَهْلِ النَّارِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ، فَيَصْبَغُ فِي النَّارِ صَبْغَةً، ثُمَّ يُقَالُ: يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ هَلْ رَأَيْتَ عَذْرًا أَقْطَ؟ هَلْ مَرَّ بِكَ نَعِيمٌ قَطُّ؟ فَيَقُولُ: لَا وَاللَّهِ يَا رَبِّ. وَنُفَقَى بِأَخْدَ النَّاسِ نَوْسًا فِي الدُّنْيَا مِنْ أَهْلِ الْجَنَّةِ، فَيَصْبَغُ صَبْغَةً فِي الْجَنَّةِ، فَيُقَالُ لَهُ: يَا ابْنَ آدَمَ هَلْ رَأَيْتَ نَوْسًا أَقْطَ؟ هَلْ مَرَّ بِكَ شِدَّةٌ قَطُّ؟ فَيَقُولُ: لَا، وَاللَّهِ، مَا مَرَّ بِي نَوْسٌ قَطُّ، وَلَا رَأَيْتَ شِدَّةً قَطُّ"<sup>208</sup>

The Hadith clearly states that on the Day of Judgment, a person who experienced extreme difficulties and misery in world will have glimpse of heaven and then asked: have you ever experienced any misery, he will reply no I have not experienced any difficulty ever.

This Hadith provides motivation to all those who face challenges and difficulties in this world to be hopeful in hereafter for the reward. Another Hadith states:

قَالَ تَحْمُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ ثَمَانِينَ صَبْرِيَّةً وَتُصِيبُ الْفَتْمَةَ إِلَّا كَلَّمَ اللَّهُ بِهَا عَنْهُ. عَلَى الشُّرُوكِ وَتُغَاكِبُهَا<sup>209</sup>

This Hadith is full of hope that whenever a believer receives any pain or difficulty, even if it is the prick he receives from a thorn, he gets reward against that pain. So In this world, if someone is going through tests and sufferings, he should remain hopeful that these difficulties are to make him closer to God.

The close study of Islamic tradition reveals that existence of evil or suffering has not been presented in the Glorious Qur'an and Hadith as theoretical problem to be

<sup>208</sup> Muhammad Ayub, Abdul Razzaq (tr.), *Jamal Ul Tirmizi*, Vol 2, p. 232.

<sup>209</sup> Muhammad Khan (tr.), *Sahih Ul Muslim*, Vol 3, p. 490.



**resolved, rather as phenomena of human experience to actualize the purpose of this worldly life. The Glorious Qur'an emphasizes on ephemerality and deceiving amusement of this worldly life as it says:**

[illegible]

**This world is clearly stated as material of delusion. The Islamic tradition portrays existence of suffering as trail for humans which is a part of divine plan so much so that even prophets are not excluded. Therefore the Glorious Qur'an mentions twenty five prophets (Peace be upon them) by name while describing challenges faced by them in conveying the prophetic message to their communities.**

**The Prophet Ayoob (Job) is the perfect example for the same. Prophet Ayoob's continues devotion and submission to Allah's will in both health and prosperity and during affliction and hardships is the reason that the Glorious Qur'an gives him title of an excellent servant.**

**Bart D. Ehrman has rejected all Biblical approaches to theodicy on the basis of mere logics. This problem may be solved logically keeping in view the divine guidance. There is no one on the earth who denies death whether he is agnostic, atheist, monotheist or polytheist and that is the point which concludes the topic. All Biblical approaches to existence of evil are supported by the Glorious Qur'an and may be given logical sequence to comprehend it. This world and everything in it will be vanished one day which indicates that there is a purpose behind creation of all this. The purpose is to judge the good ones from the bad ones and for that humans have been given freewill. Sometimes humans do not use freewill in accordance with the divine laws, so they create violence and evil in the world and resultantly they face suffering as punishment. At times they use freewill in positive way but still they face sufferings and pain as test and trial. Ultimately all the pain and suffering in this world will be redemptive and**

humans will be rewarded or punished according to their response and reaction to pain and suffering. In this way, all Bible approaches are encompassing each other in the light of Islamic tradition.

### **3. A. 4. Jesus's (Peace be upon him) Divinity in the light of Modern Bible Versions**

It is important to analyze the divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) since Christianity today has become religion which revolves around Jesus (Peace be upon him). The allegorical method which led to critical study of the Bible paved way to divinity of Jesus (Peace be upon him). Initially in ancient times, there was no concept of Jesus (Peace be upon him) divine nature at all. It was later developed through the allegorical interpretation of Astrotheological Gods of pagan world. In antiquity, Astrotheological gods were associated with seasonal cycle of earth's fertility who were supposed to rise in the time of fertility and die with the end of season. From this pagan concept, some Christians brought the concept of Jesus (Peace be upon him) divinity.

All four canonical gospels describe Jesus (Peace be upon him) but none of first three Gospels talks about Jesus (Peace be upon him) nature (whether he was a human or divine) because it was obvious for them that he was of course a human so they described his birth and other stories of his life. Only Gospel of John focuses on nature of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and his divinity but there is no clear indication at all for his divine nature.

We find in gospels that Jesus (Peace be upon him) has been described as son of god, but it is not equal to saying him as god because this impression was influenced by old testament writings as we find many individuals being said son of god in Old Testament<sup>210</sup> which did not make any one of them god, instead this impression was used to show special relation of those chosen one with god.

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<sup>210</sup>2 Samuel 7:11–14.

Bart D. Ehrman has adopted "Postdictive" approach in most of his books because he considers himself historian. Taking the same approach forward, I will try to analyze three major approaches about nature of Jesus (Peace be upon him) discussed by Bart D. Ehrman in the light of 20<sup>th</sup> century versions.

The actual concept which was given by Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) himself was unity of god and monotheism. Later scribes molded text of New Testament according to their beliefs.

By close analysis, we find that every group intended to speak bible what they believed and tried to make it closer and clearer to their point of view. We find Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him)'s birth story only in Gospel of Matthew and Luke. In Luke we find the story of travelling to temple, Luke states while explaining the early life of Jesus (Peace be upon him) that when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus (Peace be upon him) to temple "his father and mother were marveling at what was said to him".<sup>211</sup> This is Adoptionist version which modified the text to emphasize on the humanity and human nature of Jesus (Peace be upon him). Since they were advocates of humanity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) so they exaggerated in humanity of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and tried to prove that he was naturally born from father and mother like other humans. Later proto orthodox who were the supporters of Jesus (Peace be upon him) divine nature modified the text to deny this and prove divinity through virgin birth of Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) (which is a fact and proved by the Glorious Qur'an) so they altered by saying "Joseph and his mother were marveling at what was said to him" so now text asserts that Joseph was not his father, instead Jesus (Peace be upon him) was born of virgin.<sup>212</sup>

By analyzing the modern versions, we find that most of the reformation period (when printing press emerged) versions read Luke 2:33 as "Joseph and his mother were marveling at what was said to him" e.g. KJV of 1611 and Geneva Bible of 1599 both

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<sup>211</sup>Luke 2:33.

<sup>212</sup>Bart D. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, p. 157.

read the same. Whereas most of the modern time (20<sup>th</sup> century) versions e.g. ERV of 1881, ASV of 1901, RSV of 1952 and NASB of 1971 seem to be influenced by Adoptionist Christology and therefore read Luke 2:33 as "his father and mother were marveling at what was said to him" in order to prove full human nature (natural birth) and to reject divine nature (virgin birth) of Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him). It is very interesting that the revised version of KJV of 1611 which is the most widely used version in America now days is the only modern translation which follows KJV in Luke 2:33. Otherwise all modern translations are inclined towards Adoptionist (Human nature) point of view.

It seems that KJV of 1611 and RKJV are more compatible to the Bible which is most likely the original because it is very difficult to establish relationship of husband and wife between Joseph and Mary from biblical point of view as well as Qur'anic aspect, whereas the virgin birth of Mary is established fact from the Bible and the Glorious Qur'an both and all verses which prove virgin birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him) contradict to Joseph being the father of Jesus (Peace be upon him).

The New Testament mentions Joseph on various places with variety of relations. In Matthew on one place, it says "And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus (Peace be upon him), who is called Christ."<sup>213</sup> In this verse, Joseph is told to be Mary's husband. Two verses later, gospel of Matthew states "Now the birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him) Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit".<sup>214</sup> Whether Joseph was engaged to Mary or he got married, it is not clear.

The gospel of Luke also mentions Joseph so it says while-describing-the journey to Bethlehem "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and

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<sup>213</sup>Matthew 1:16.

<sup>214</sup>Matthew 1:18.

lineage of David, to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child".<sup>215</sup>

This verse tells us that till that time, Joseph was only engaged to Mary, but when they got married, there is no mentioning of that, rather it is only mentioned in Jesus (Peace be upon him) genealogy that Joseph was husband of Mary.

Another example of the same problem occurs in gospel of Luke while describing the story of travel to Jerusalem for Passover as it tells us that when Joseph, Mary and Jesus (Peace be upon him) went to attend the festival, after festival whole family went back except Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) who stayed there without informing the family as KJV states it "and when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus (Peace be upon him) tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it."<sup>216</sup>

Most of the modern versions except RKJV read it as "his parents did not know about him" which seems to be influenced by Adoptionist Christology to prove that Jesus (Peace be upon him) was human and he had parents (Joseph as father and Mary as mother).

The former (KJV) reading looks like original because as I have mentioned earlier that it is difficult to establish husband wife relationship between Joseph and Mary from Biblical aspect as well as Qur'anic point of view.

The Bible (New Testament) presents variety of relations of Joseph with Mary whereas the Glorious Qur'an does not mention Joseph at all while the whole complete surah has been dedicated for Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him) birth narrative (Surah Maryam). I have mentioned above one example of Joseph each from gospel of Matthew and Luke. Matthew presents him in one verse as husband of Mary and two verses later as betrothed to Mary. Likewise Luke mentions him as engaged to Mary. Moreover, on various occasions, Gospels state Mary as virgin which indicates that she did not had any husband.

On some places, Joseph has been mentioned by name in a way which indicates that he was only guardian to Jesus (Peace be upon him) and his mother, for example Matthew

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<sup>215</sup>Luke 2:4-5.

<sup>216</sup>Luke 2:43.

says while telling the story of travel to Egypt "Now when they had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream" and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him".<sup>217</sup> All New Testament versions describe this story in same manner which shows that Joseph was just a guardian to Mary and his child instead of being his husband because the angel said to Joseph "take the child and his mother", why he did not said "take your child and wife" because he was not her husband. Considering the above statements, it becomes evident that it is very difficult to establish one relationship between Mary and Joseph from Biblical perspective whereas the Glorious Qur'an does not mention Joseph even a single time while describing the story of Maryam in dedicated chapter.

It seems that most of the modern versions are inclined towards human nature (Adoptionist Christology) of Jesus (Peace be upon him) although in doing so these present exaggerated form of Jesus (Peace be upon him) nature by portraying husband wife relationship between Joseph and Mary and by presenting parents for Jesus (Peace be upon him) which is against the virgin birth.

### **3. A. 5. Adoptionism and Virgin birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him)**

As I have mentioned earlier, advocates of Adoptionist Christology rejected virgin birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him) in order to prove his full humanity. The concept of Virgin birth is an established belief from New Testament as well as the Glorious Qur'an which cannot be denied.

The gospel of Matthew and Luke explicitly mentions virgin birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and all versions are compatible to each other in this statement. Matthew states "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel"<sup>218</sup> (which means, God with us). This states very clearly that Mary was virgin

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<sup>217</sup> Matthew 2:13.

<sup>218</sup> Matthew 1:23.

at the time of birth of Prophet Jesus (Peace be upon him). Likewise gospel of Luke states while describing the story of conversation between the angel and Mary that when angel gave her greetings for the birth of baby, she amazed as Luke mentions: "and he came to her and said, "Greetings, O favored one, the Lord Is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and tried to discern what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus (Peace be upon him). He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I am a virgin?" And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy--the Son of God"<sup>219</sup>. It is clearly mentioned that Mary reacted upon the greetings by the angel with shock by stating "How will this be, since I am a virgin". All versions present the same form of this conversation.

It is very important to mention that Luke's story is very much similar to narrative explained in the Qur'an. The Glorious Qur'an mentions Maryam (PBUH) on various places. In surah Ale Imran and surah Maryam, the detailed narrative of Jesus (Peace be upon him) birth has been mentioned.

Allah Almighty says in the Qur'an in Surah Al-e- Imran:

إِذْ قَالَتِ الْمَرْيَمُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مُتَوَكِّلٌ عَلَيَّ وَنِعْمَ الْمَكِينُ ۖ اسْمُهُ إِسْمَاعِيلُ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا فِي الْأَحْزَابِ ۖ وَتَحْتِهَا يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

وَوَكَّلْنَا النَّاسَ بِهَا الْمُتَلَوِّينَ

قَالَتْ هَبْ أَلَيْ مَا يَكُونُ لِي وَلَمْ يَمْسَسْنِي بَشَرٌ ۖ قَالَ كَذَلِكِ الْأَلَّهُ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ ۚ إِذْ أَقْبَضَ أَمْرًا قَالُوا لَوْلَا لَهُ كُنْ يَكُونُ

<sup>219</sup> Luke 1:28-35.

(3:44-46)

In these ayaat, it has been clearly stated that when the angel informed her that she would have son, she was shocked and reacted with the statement that “how it would be while no man has ever touched me”. And the angel replied “this is how Allah creates what he wants and when he decides something, he simply says it to be and it comes to be”. This statement is completely well-matched to the statement mentioned in gospel of Luke in which Mary responded upon greetings of son by angel with surprise.

Few ayaat later, Allah almighty says:

”إِنَّ مَثَلَ عِيسَىٰ عِندَ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ آدَمَ خَلَقَهُ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ قَالَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ“ (3:58).

This ayah is to clear all confusions about the virgin birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and to answer all those who deny the virgin birth. The logic presented in this ayah is very solid that it is agreed upon by all Christians as well as people of other faiths that Adam (Peace be upon him) was born without father and mother, if Allah can do this then why he cannot create Jesus (Peace be upon him) without father, of course He has all the powers to do so. So the linkage between the birth of Adam (Peace be upon him) and Jesus (Peace be upon him) is the evidence for virgin birth.

In Surah Maryam, Allah Almighty describes the story of birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him) in somehow different words as it states:

لَقَدْ خَلَقْتَنِي مِنْ نَفْسٍ فَهَرُبْتُ بِالْحُرْمَةِ إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْمَعَارِفِ

قَالَ إِنِّي أَنْصُرُكَ أَنْ تَقُولَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُنْكَرِ

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيَّ أَنْ أُعَلِّمَ الْبَشَرَ إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ تَقُولَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنْ الْمُنْكَرِ

قَالَ إِنِّي أَنْصُرُكَ أَنْ تَقُولَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الْمُنْكَرِ (19:16-19).



This narrative is more detailed because in this ayah, Maryam (Peace be upon her) distinguished two reasons in response to greetings for the birth of son. Firstly she responded that "how I would have son while no man has ever touched me". This was indication to lawful relation with man (engagement, marriage). The second reason she presented in response to angel's greetings was that "I am not woman of loose morals" which was indication to unlawful relation with man. Maryam (Peace be upon her) response to angel acknowledges her virginity at the time of birth.

Through close analysis of virgin birth in the Glorious Qur'an, we find that on various occasions, Allah Almighty praised Maryam (Peace be upon her) as "the one who guarded her private part". Qur'an says:

وَنَزَّلْنَاهَا مِنْهَا وَأَخْصَتْ لِرَجُلٍ فَكُنَّا آلُ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَنُوحًا وَصِدْقًا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ. (66:12)

On another place, it mentions:

وَالْحُجَّاءُ أَخْصَتْ لِرَجُلٍ فَكُنَّا آلُ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ وَنُوحًا وَصِدْقًا وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ. (21:91)

The word used in both of above mentioned ayaat is "أَخْصَتْ" which is derived from Arabic word "حصن" which means "a fortress". This word gives a sense of making something "Inaccessible" which indicates to Maryam's (Peace be upon her) chastity.

All of above mentioned ayaat of the Glorious Qur'an and Bible indicates to virgin birth of Jesus (Peace be upon him) and denies Adoptionistic Christology which advocates the fatherhood of Joseph for Jesus (Peace be upon him). Keeping this in view, we can conclude that most of the modern Bible versions present exaggerated view of Jesus's (Peace be upon him) humanity by establishing husband wife relationship between Joseph and Mary.

## **Conclusion**

**During the 20<sup>th</sup> century and particularly in its second half, American Christians have seen large number of New Testament translations and this activity is still going on. The reason behind this mass production of New Testament versions is reader oriented approach which is dominant approach of contemporary times. The ignition point for emergence of this approach was the use of allegorical method for New Testament interpretation in ancient times which later on led to critical study of New Testament.**

**Various prominent American polemics and apologetic scholars are engaged to deal with the problem of Biblical criticism. Among them, Bart D. Ehrman is influential scholar whose books are being taught at American colleges as text books. He speaks extensively throughout American universities and seminaries. He is considered to be one of Americas leading textual critics.**

**Bart D Ehrman has evaluated the Doctrines and Theology of New Testament by applying "Postdictive" approach through application of Historical critical methodology. The application of this method on religious doctrines is the major reason for him to leave the faith and become agnostic, since religion cannot be completely understood on the basis of historical evidences and mere logics. There is always something beyond evidence is required to be faithful. Nevertheless his influence on contemporary scholarship is widespread since he has received numerous academic awards and his books are being taught in American colleges as text book.**

**Due to solid and convincing arguments of Bart D. Ehrman on inerrancy of New Testament, many American apologetic scholars have started admitting that many discrepancies in New Testament cannot be reconciled and therefore New Testament has not remained inerrant. Mike Licona openly acknowledged during a debate with Bart D. Ehrman that there are many discrepancies in New Testament which cannot be reconciled and therefore New Testament has not remained inerrant, rather inerrancy**

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