



## Thought Testing: Josh McDowell: Manuscript Comparison: The New Testament vis-à-vis Homer & Other Ancient Works; Motivational & Functional Virtues

### The Textual Comparison.

Bruce Metzger observes [in *The Text of the New Testament*]: “Of all the literary compositions by the Greek people, the **Homeric poems** are the best suited for comparison with the Bible. In the entire range of ancient Greek and Latin literature, the *Iliad* ranks next to the New Testament in possessing the greatest amount of manuscript testimony.

“In antiquity men [1] memorized Homer as later they were to memorize the Scriptures. [2] Each was held in the highest esteem and quoted in defense of arguments pertaining to heaven, earth, and Hades. [3] Homer and the Bible served as primers from which different generations of school boys were taught to read. [4] Around both there grew up a mass of scholia [marginal notes or comments] and commentaries. [5] They were provided with glossaries. [6] Both fell into the hands of allegorists. [7] Both were imitated and supplemented—one with the Homeric Hymns and writings such as the *Batrachomyomachia* [βατραχομυομαχία, *batrachomumachia*: **The Battle of Frogs and Mice, a comic epic or parody on the *Iliad*, definitely attributed to Homer by the Romans, but according to Plutarch the work of Pigres (Πίγρης, *Pigrēs* of Halicarnassus)**, and the other with apocryphal books. [8] Homer was made available in prose analyses; the Gospel of John was turned into epic hexameters by Nonnus [nän' us] of Panopolis [5th century Greek epic poet; converted to Christianity; wrote a paraphrase of John's Gospel.]. [9] The manuscripts of both Homer and the Bible were illustrated. [10] Homeric scenes appeared in Pompeian murals; Christian basilicas were decorated with mosaics and frescoes of Biblical episodes.

Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix [in *A General Introduction to the Bible*, 475] make a comparison of the textual variations between the New Testament documents and ancient works: “Next to the New Testament, there are more extant manuscripts of the *Iliad* (643) than any other book. Both it and the Bible were considered ‘sacred,’ and both underwent textual changes and criticism of their Greek manuscripts. The New Testament had about 20,000 lines. The *Iliad* [has] about 15,600. Only 40 lines (or 400 words) of the New Testament are in doubt whereas 764 lines of the *Iliad* are questioned. This five percent textual corruption compares with one-half of one percent of similar emendations in the New Testament.” (p. 43) [See Visual: NT cp/w Other Works of Antiquity]

- (45) McDowell contributes an anecdote that emphasizes the harmony of the Bible as compared to the great writings of the ancient and modern world that are accumulated in Encyclopaedia Britannica's *Great Books of the Western World* which begins with Homer (9th to 8th century B.C.) and concludes with Sigmund Freud (A.D. 1856-1939).

### McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, 17:

A representative of the *Great Books of the Western World* came to my house recruiting salesmen for their series. He spread out the chart of the *Great Books of the Western World* series. He spent five minutes talking to us about the ... series, and we spent an hour and a half talking to him about the Greatest Book.

I challenged him to take just 10 of the authors, all from one walk of life, one generation, one place, one time, one mood, one continent, one language and just one controversial subject (the Bible speaks on hundreds with harmony and agreement).

Then I asked him: “Would they (the authors) agree?” He paused and then replied, “No!” “What would you have?” I retorted. Immediately he said, “A conglomeration.” Two days later he committed his life to Christ.

- (46) The Shulammite is not confused by the circumstances she faces before Solomon and his virgins. She understands divine revelation regarding the corporate marriage of right man-right woman and remains loyal to it principles.



- (47) Thus the Shulammite withstands the advances of Solomon but without doctrine to guard her soul she could very easily have been compromised by the most powerful man in Israel. Solomon deviated from the standard but the Shulammite stood fast and held her ground with flying colors.
- (48) This is not possible without resident doctrine. Women are vulnerable to men who instinctively know how to take advantage of their natural trait to respond to male aggression.
- (49) Confidence in the veracity and immutability of the Word of God provides courage toward life and circumstances.
- (50) In addition, one's reliance on the wisdom of God is expressed in the motivational virtue of worship. Worship is an expression of reciprocal love in the soul.
- (51) These virtues result in the visible functional virtue of morality which along with courage is directed toward man and circumstances.
- (52) And finally the motivational virtue of personal love for God results in the functional virtue of unconditional love of all mankind.
- (53) Motivational and functional virtues may be compared by noting that the former is discriminatory while the latter is nondiscriminatory.
- (54) Motivational virtues are the responsibilities of the royal priest while functional virtues are the responsibilities of the royal ambassador.
- (55) **Worship** is a motivational virtue directed toward God and is discriminatory toward its five categories: (1) Bible study, (2) the Eucharist, (3) prayer, (4) singing, and (5) giving.
- (56) **Morality** is a functional virtue that is nondiscriminatory based on biblical mandates.
- (57) **Confidence** is a motivational virtue and is discriminatory toward the Word of God and its doctrines.
- (58) **Courage** is a functional virtue that is nondiscriminatory toward life and circumstances.
- (59) **Personal love** is a motivational virtue and is discriminatory toward God.
- (60) **Unconditional love** is a functional virtue and is nondiscriminatory toward all mankind.