

Although the contents of the following work are instructive, their sole purpose is not simply to instruct. Instead, they are offered as a catalyst to fuel one's God-given imagination so that the infinite mind of the Word might shed some small part of Himself upon all who dare to embrace a knowledge of the sublime as a child seeks to embrace the ineffable mystery of a clear blue sky.

W.K.S. 4.10.16

In Our Darkest Hour

IT IS SAID *The Bible* contains more than three thousand promises that God has made to humanity. Many are conditional and require a response from the recipients before God keeps those promises, while many are kept unconditionally, regardless of whether the recipients cooperate in their fulfillment.

This is the story of one of those promises that God kept unconditionally, a promise made to Adam and his descendants that was to be the key to unlocking every other promise God would ever make to humanity. As it turns out, it is also a promise of God that involves some of the most overlooked aspects of biblical history. Why?

Because unbeknownst to most modern-day Christians living in the West, the men who recorded the events surrounding this fulfilled promise were quoting from the Greek translation of *The Old Testament* called *The Septuagint*. As a result, their understanding of biblical history was far different from ours today.

Case in point, the writers of *The New Testament* believed that the time from Adam to Christ represented a 5,500-year timeline, as opposed to the one inspired by the King James Version of *The Bible*, which depicts this time period as being some 4,000 years. Why does that matter?

It matters because this lesser-known timeline of 5,500 years, found in *The Septuagint*, does everything to confirm God's control over history and faithfulness to His word while the traditional 4,000-year time frame does nothing but obscure and nullify another vitally important aspect concerning the most pivotal promise ever made and kept by God in history.

It is the story of this forgotten chapter of biblical history, then, that this book, *Tales of Forever: The Unfolding Drama of God's Hidden Hand in History*, will seek to uncover and illuminate. In the telling of this tale of God's primordial promise, known as the prophecy of the Great Five and a Half Days, the reader will rediscover a long-lost truth regarding the Lord's plan to send humanity a Savior, when in our darkest hour God provided the most clear-cut proof of His control and faithfulness the world would ever know.

A List of the Five

FIVE THINGS ... five *sacred* things... The Ark of the Covenant, The Spear of Destiny, The Shroud of Turin, The Great Pyramid of Giza, and *The Septuagint Bible*.

Believe it or not, these five things all have one thing in common. And as it turns out, this one thing just happens to provide the key to a startling proof of God's control over every aspect of world history, proof of God's faithfulness to every promise He has ever made to the children of Adam.

Now, just in case there is anyone reading this who does not know what these five things are, let me briefly describe them without bogging down in the endless debate over the authenticity of the various claims made about them:

One, **The Ark of the Covenant**, also known as The Ark of Testimony, is the wooden chest overlaid in gold, in which the Israelites carried the two stone tablets of the Ten Commandments.

Two, **The Spear of Destiny**, also known as The Holy Lance or The Spear of Longinus, is the Roman centurion's spear that pierced the side of Jesus as He hung on the cross.

Three, **The Shroud of Turin**, also known as The Holy Shroud, is the linen burial cloth that bears the image of the resurrected Christ.

Four, **The Great Pyramid of Giza**, also known as *The Bible in Stone*, is the only remaining structure among the Seven Wonders of the World and is said to contain the prophetic history of Scripture in its geometric dimensions.

And five, **The Septuagint Bible**, also known as *The Greek Old Testament*, is the vernacular translation of *The Hebrew Bible*, produced around 250 B.C., and is the book most often quoted by the writers of *The New Testament*.

To anyone who doubts that God's control and faithfulness can be proved to be a tangible and verifiable fact of life, these five things hold the key to that proof—proof of God's hidden yet potent hand at work throughout the course of human affairs.

Five things ... five *sacred* things—and the knowledge they convey—though scattered through time and space, have now, within the pages of this unique book, been pieced together to tell the ultimate tale of God's intention toward humanity.

Some Foreword Thinking

Stranger than Fiction

THIS IS A TALE beyond imagination yet true—a tale stranger than any fiction ever conceived by the mind of mankind, because in order to tell the ultimate tale of God's intention toward humanity, this tale of five *sacred* things and the knowledge they convey, one must weave together all the elements of the greatest tales ever told.

An ancient prophecy, a promise of “days,” which precisely foretold the Advent of Christ, given to the primordial parents of our race and recorded in the oldest story contained in the biblical record—a prophecy that bears a striking similarity to the messianic chronology found in *The Septuagint Bible*, the book most often quoted by the writers of *The New Testament*. But, as so often happens, this most ancient of all stories, and a knowledge of the prophecy it contained, eventually fell out of favor in the wake of certain political movements and was swept away, never to be seen again in the West for over a thousand years.

One man, set apart from all others, who was said to have talked with God, face to face, having a conversation that took place not in any earthly realm but at the very pinnacle of Heaven itself—a conversation written in a book for all humanity to read. Yet, because of its startling and enigmatic message, it was considered unsuitable for viewing by the common people, so sometime in the latter half of the fourth century of the Christian Era, it was banned and subsequently thought to much of the world for more than a millennium.

And an array of sacred artifacts, each one a talisman well known to emanate an uncanny power to affect the hearts and minds of those who encountered them. Although every one of these objects appear insignificant at first glance, according to legend, they are all said to be more potent than any man-made weapon—The Ark of the Covenant, The Spear of Destiny, and The Shroud of Turin. The other object amongst this array, however, is not so much an artifact as it is a colossus of a structure—The Great Pyramid of Giza.

All these elements, then—a man and his heavenly conversation, a promise of “days,” an ark, a spear, a shroud, a pyramid, and a book, that is to say, everything needed to demonstrate a startling proof of God's control and faithfulness—have for the first time been forged into a single storyline, to tell the *Tales of Forever: The Unfolding Drama of God's Hidden Hand in History*.

From Out of Nowhere

BUT BEFORE I BEGIN, one would do well to keep several important points in mind as we proceed with the telling of this tale of five *sacred* things, of the special connection they hold in common, and the startling proof this connection conveys to an onlooking world—a proof that naturally has its origins in the written record of Scripture. And rest assured, although readers of this work will find themselves on a firm foundation of biblical truth, the process of investigating these origins will undoubtedly challenge their traditional view of *The Bible* as it is known today in the West. This is because a fundamental requirement in penetrating the veil that hides the truth concerning these five things is that one must first be willing to venture into territory familiar only to those who have encountered such works as *The Septuagint Bible*, one of the earliest known vernacular translations of *The Old Testament*—one of several books that, as we will soon be discovering, have all, at various times throughout their history, fallen in and out of favor.

This leads us, then, to important point number one: Throughout the entire course of history, the process of choosing which books were to be considered “acceptable” has been a veritable roller coaster of political correctness. As much as we would like to believe otherwise, the harsh reality is that the primary factor in deeming certain books as either inspired or heretical has been based not so much on matters of personal conscience as it has been on which political system was in power at a particular time and place. Still, this does not mean that these decision makers have always been able to enforce their political will in all places and at all times. More importantly, when it comes to the history of the formation of the Biblical Canon, what we are dealing with is, and always will be, an international struggle of global proportions. Ever since the Great Schism of the eleventh century, the Orthodox Church has occupied the East, while the Catholic and Protestant branches of Christianity have occupied the West. And because of this, the fact that some books are said to have been rejected and excised actually means that they were—contrary to popular opinion—not so much lost as they were marginalized and subsequently forgotten by a specific geographical segment of Christendom.¹ This overriding fact, in turn, has several consequences that are critical to this present-day study, both of which have occurred as a direct result of the point-of-view of this work, which happens to be a Western Protestant one.

Important point number two that emerges from this admittedly Western view is that when we speak—as we often will in this work—about lost books, lost chronologies, and lost truths of *The Bible*, keep in mind that we are not implying that these things have ever been lost in the strictest sense of that word. What we are really saying is that they simply lost their foothold in the West, while remaining part and parcel of the orthodoxy in the East; or in some cases, what fell out of favor in the Protestant West held fast in the Catholic West. This more than anything else accounts for the apparently sensational aspect of the so-called “discovery” of manuscripts, all which had generally been thought to be lost forever.

It is also critical to realize—important point number three—that this sort of thing is not at all unusual in terms of the overall landscape of biblical history. The same idea undergirds our understanding of the so-called Lost Tribes of Israel. Although the northern kingdom of ancient Israel was punished and scattered throughout the nations, they were never truly lost in the sense of their having been totally annihilated; rather, they were driven “underground,” so to speak. In fact, the prophet Hosea clearly spoke about this very thing, in that the ten tribes to the north were to be punished for their idolatrous ways but only for a divinely appointed period of time, after which they were to reappear upon the stage of world history, as if from out of nowhere.

This, in turn, brings us to important point number four. I am one who firmly believes that this same phenomenon is at work when we as a Western people, dominated by a Protestant view of the Biblical Canon, are now the recipients of lost books that have all been—according to God’s set time—rediscovered and restored to the West after centuries of having been deprived of their contents. And rather than scoff at such a possibility, one might humbly reconsider it in light of the facts that come forth from an in-depth examination of these various manuscripts, many of which

¹ *The Many Faces of Christ: The Thousand-Year Story of the Survival and Influence of the Lost Gospels*, Philip Jenkins; Basic Books, 2015, pp. 6-7

will prove to be more than capable of standing side by side with the traditional books of Scripture, as we will shortly demonstrate.

And finally, for important point number five. Unlike those who profess to believe in God's ability to protect His written revelation but reject the great antiquity alleged by the authors of that record, this writer believes that when *The Bible* declares that men like Enoch, the scribe – that is, *the writer* – received a message from God, which Enoch conveyed in books, that declaration should be accepted. Furthermore, if the biblical record states that these books were written prior to the Great Flood, then I, for one, have no problem believing that other books were also written many centuries before typical scholarship has been willing to admit. After all, is it not written: In the beginning was the Word, and through the same Word, the entire Universe was created?² How absurd, then, to relinquish the inevitable conclusion that if the Word of God communicated His truth to not only Enoch but also Adam before him and Abraham after him that the end result of those communications would not have produced some form of written record. Therefore, it is with all the preceding ideas in mind that I now carry on with this tale of five *sacred* things, with the unfolding drama of God's hidden hand in history, that is to say, with *The Tales* that are ... forever.

The Unfolding Drama

IN 1650, ARCHBISHOP James Ussher published one of the most influential biblical chronologies ever set forth as the unassailable word of God. By using texts in *The Book of Genesis*, together with other passages from Scripture, Ussher calculated that the world was created on the 23rd day of October, in the year 4,004 B.C. To this day, most Christians would never think to dispute such a finding, and if ever challenged would undoubtedly defend this “fact” to the death, not knowing why, other than that it had been included in so many copies of their *Bible*. But sadly, as well-intentioned as these defenders of the faith are, they may, upon further review of all things scriptural, actually be defending a proverbial Trojan horse.

Nearly lost to history is the knowledge that long before Archbishop Ussher offered his chronology as the “gospel truth,” there was already another chronological system that had been universally accepted for the first fifteen centuries of Christendom. This chronology, derived from *The Septuagint Bible*, adhered to a five thousand, five hundred year period from the Fall of Adam to the Advent of Christ. And though it had withstood the test of time for so many centuries, it ultimately fell victim to one of the most ironic twists in history and was replaced by a more politically correct translation, which influenced all subsequent versions of *The English Bible* as we know it today. So, with *The Septuagint* having been officially relegated to the dustbin of apocryphal literature, the way was unwittingly paved for Ussher's “new and improved” chronology – one that most biblical scholars will admit is at odds with every known historical account, both Jewish and Christian.

Of course *The Septuagint* was not the first book to have suffered the wrath of ecclesiastical scorn. Included in the halls of the similarly excised were such legendary texts as those ascribed to Enoch, the man who famously walked and talked with God. And though one can assume that the truths conveyed in that conversation might be of great interest, this natural human curiosity was summarily short-circuited when religious authorities, declaring these books unsuitable for common folk, banned them. Such are the perpetual tug of wars – theologically-speaking – that have plagued the entire history of *The Bible* so that what was once perfectly acceptable is almost overnight deemed an object of holy revulsion. As a result, many of the world's most revered manuscripts, rejected and suppressed, have sadly been lost to history forever ... or so it would seem.

It is to the tumultuous story of these lost books, lost chronologies, and lost truths, then, that this work will turn in an effort to shed new light on what I believe to be the ultimate tale of God's intention toward humanity. To do so, this book – unlike any other that deals with such subjects as scriptural interpretation, biblical chronology, and religious artifacts – will not only offer evidence from history but also from the very books that have, down through the ages, generated

² *John* 1:1-3

so much derision and controversy. By analyzing the historical and theological validity of texts like those penned by the likes of Enoch, the scribe, as well as inviting the reader to peruse several of them in their entirety, *Tales of Forever* will provide a unique window into our biblical past. And in the process, even the layperson will be able to judge for themselves what has, for so very long, been the exclusive domain of the elite and the scholar, the esoteric and the clandestine.

Consequently, readers will find themselves on an unprecedented journey in which the traditional notions concerning the so-called *Lost Books of The Bible* are turned completely upside down. What appears to be one of the great failures of history will, within the pages of this book, be portrayed not as having occurred in spite of God's best efforts to reveal His truth but as a direct result of His desire to hide it. No doubt Solomon had this in mind when he uttered his proverb: "God in His greatness has concealed many things, while kings have the honor of discovering them."³ Simply put, in order to fully apprehend the manifold truths of Scripture—particularly as they pertain to the five *sacred* things and the proof of God's control and faithfulness that they convey—one must come to grips with a peculiar paradox: In the course of the unfolding drama of history, God has made it abundantly clear that He is far less concerned with how obvious He has made the truth than with how artfully He has hidden it in plain sight.

A Spoiler Alert

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT: This is a concept you will hear a lot about in this book. What is more, you will not only be told what it means—that is, in the context of this particular work—but you will also be challenged to test your own skills of discernment in the process. The reason for this is because this book just happens to be one that was written to both expound and conceal the truth at the same time. Naturally, you may wonder why I would do something that seems so blatantly contradictory, but before you judge me too harshly, please understand one more very important point. I am not doing this out of some twisted desire on my part. In my own defense, I am doing this because what I am writing about is, itself, a thing that is hidden in plain sight. In fact, it is nothing less than the unveiling of a heretofore hidden drama of the ages, the true nature of which we, like an audience sitting in a darkened theater, are scarcely aware of, even as we are watching it on the screen. To be sure, we are all participants of this living drama, yet the vast majority of us who are playing our part are doing so without ever appreciating the extent to which it is being orchestrated by none other than God Himself, the Ultimate Director of human history. And just as the story of the Lord's redemptive drama is one that is artfully hidden in plain sight, this work endeavors to mirror this same quality.

Therefore, the real story contained in this book—that is, the unveiling of God's control and faithfulness conveyed in the five *sacred* things—has been written as a story-within-a-story concerning the lost truths, lost chronologies, and lost books of our collective biblical past. And because of my acute awareness of this paradoxical nature of the divine drama, I, too, have sought to maintain a similarly delicate balance between the two equal but opposite forces that seek to expound as well as conceal its essential meaning. As such, I have attempted to design this book in such a way that it might adequately communicate the truth for the sake of a genuinely open-minded audience, while at the same time not trying too hard to convey it to an admittedly cynical one.

That said, I wish to introduce this book with the following explanation. The book you are reading is not one book but two. Ordinarily, a book is classified as being either a work of nonfiction or fiction, with the first kind of book reading like a documentary, and the second, like a movie. In this way, every book is written specifically for one segment of the population as opposed to another. However, this one was not. To my knowledge, no book has ever been written that contains elements of nonfiction and fiction in equal balance; that is, until this one, which was written to meet the twin demands of the readers of scholarly and dramatic narratives alike. Therefore, let the reader of this work be advised: There is more than one way to read it. What does that mean? It means that, because this book was written with both skeptics and believers in mind, the kind of person you are will determine your approach to the material in it. If you are the critical type who

³ Proverbs 25:2

has to know all the behind-the-scene facts of a given scenario, then by all means you should read this book from start to finish. If, however, you are the carefree sort who prefers to avoid sweating the details, then feel free to skip *The Prelude* and *The Analyses*. In your case, you will only need to read the two sections entitled *The Translation* and *The Interlude* before moving on to *The Tales*.

But keep in mind, it does not mean that one approach to reading this book is any better than another. It just means that it was written to anticipate more than a single mindset. Put another way, some people are only inclined to crack open a history book about, say, the American World War II general George Patton after seeing a movie about him, while others would only think to read a novel about him after watching a documentary on the subject. The main thing—as far as I am concerned—is to, once and for all, introduce this all-too-often taboo subject to a much broader audience after having been confined to such a narrow one for so long. If this happens, then at least I will have accomplished the one thing any writer hopes for when attempting to interest an audience in historical events or characters: People from every walk of life will finally look for themselves upon a subject that has generally been confined to the darkened rooms of the cloistered and cryptic.

It is also important to note that when I say this book supplies the reader with a dramatic narrative in addition to a scholarly one, it should not be assumed that this narrative is entirely fictional in nature. Far from presenting mere fiction, what this book does, in fact, is to expand the original narratives found in the ancient documents we will examine in terms of everything that a full-blown dramatization has to offer. This, of course, I have done in accord with what I previously alluded to. Whereas all other books on extra-biblical texts seek to dissect their subject matter in such a way that the reader never has a chance to experience their contents in the same context that was intended by the original authors, this book will provide that opportunity by presenting the stories as complete narratives.

However, just in case there is anyone out there who insists that this is a most unscholarly approach to such a scholastically demanding subject, I have also included what I believe to be a thoroughly systematic analysis as well, specifically presented for the sake of the more investigative segment of the audience. This systematic documentation is what has been provided in *The Prelude* and *The Analyses* sections before and after *The Tales* themselves. The only drawback to this more penetrating approach is that it does come with a spoiler alert. That is to say, in order to convey the historical and theological significance of the manuscripts presented in this book, it was necessary to discuss the narratives in their entirety, and because of this, certain plot points in the stories have unavoidably been “given away” in the process.

So, to review one’s approach to reading this book: Are you the kind of person who needs some convincing before you are comfortable taking a leap of faith? Do you prefer more of a documentary approach to your subject matter? If so, you should read *The Prelude* and *The Analyses* before *The Tales*, even though you will be subjected to the occasional plot spoiler. Or, are you someone who enjoys solving a good puzzle on your own? Would you rather let the movie “do its own talking,” as it were? If so, you only need to read *The Translation* and *The Interlude* before moving on to *The Tales*. Then, after you have been sufficiently tantalized by first reading the narratives, take the time to peruse *The Prelude* and *The Analyses* before and after *The Tales*. I guarantee you will not regret it, particularly if you are one who hopes to solve the mystery of what connects the five *sacred* things. Still, either way you go, realize this: Whether you embark on this journey as a confirmed skeptic or as a true believer, every aspect of this multifaceted work will provide something special for your unique literary palette.

The Disclaimer

I WOULD ALSO LIKE to insert a disclaimer before I begin, which I feel is necessary because of the sensitive areas of knowledge into which a work like this delves. In order to present the material in its proper light, one must go into detail concerning the history of such controversial subjects as scriptural interpretation, biblical chronology, and religious artifacts, subjects that are still fraught by impassioned debates to this very day. As a result of this historical presentation, one inevitably runs the risk of stepping on numerous theological “toes,” as it were.

Without a doubt, the following story involves just as many villains as it does heroes, and consequently, like all great stories, its villainous elements are often more intriguing – and therefore more interesting – than its heroic ones. Due to this ironic nature of storytelling, it is all too tempting to swing the sword of blame and accusation, especially when it comes to a story like this one that involves so many negative forces and characters. In order to tell the whole truth about the age-old controversy of why certain biblical books, chronologies, or truths were either sanctioned or banned, the story could never be written without having to insist that someone was “at fault” for having made a decision that was deemed unwarranted by some political or religious entity. As contemplative, questioning creatures, we simply cannot avoid this very real dilemma. For every controversial issue in life, one can only confront the pros and cons of a given subject, and therefore, it is only natural to land on one side of the fence or the other.

My real concern, however, with this completely normal response, is the lengths to which some people will go to prove their point. By that I mean, if history teaches us anything about the debates that mankind is inevitably drawn into – especially when it comes to theological issues encountered in books like this – the quest for truth sometimes becomes so important that the participants lose sight of their original goals. In such a case, truth is no longer important, and the humble realization that we are all mere humans, reaching to know the unknowable, is swept aside. What began as a holy cause soon escalates into a holy war. Winning the argument, then, becomes the only goal, because it is often easier to appear the winner of the debate, while at the same time never coming one iota closer to the truth, which was the actual purpose for engaging in the quest in the first place.

As a matter of fact, this seems to me to be at the heart of every war that is waged in the name of “religion,” or “truth,” or “God,” or whatever one chooses to call it, and it is this kind of thing that, above all else, I am committed to renouncing with every ounce of my being. Therefore, the contents of this book should never be construed as an effort on my part to deride any particular doctrine of faith, which I believe – as I am sure every true American believes – is a matter of strictest conscience, and as such is off-limits to criticism by anyone.

This, then, is the essence of my disclaimer. To anyone who reads the present volume of *Analyses* and *Tales*, please keep in mind that I bear no ill will toward any person or group of persons, even while trying my best to present what I believe to be the unbiased facts that are central to this story. Just because certain individuals made decisions – as a result of their heartfelt convictions – that certain books should be excised from the Canon of Scripture and therefore suppressed from public circulation, does not mean that I hold those people to be evil or deluded. No one but God, I believe, is qualified to make such a judgment. Similarly, I feel no animosity or hatred toward any religion or denomination just because I point out from history that those who excised certain books belonged to a specific religious group.

And the reason I feel this is never an option is because of my own view on the nature of truth as I perceive it to be revealed in *The Bible* and by the One Who is the final arbitrator of the truth contained in it. To the best of my knowledge, I have never known the Jesus that I see in Scripture to have ever condemned an individual *per se*. What I do see Him condemning are the attitudes and beliefs of certain ones that have their origin in what can best be described as institutionally-oriented, or, to put it another way, system-oriented mindsets. In other words, Jesus seems less concerned with condemning individual sinners and more interested in attacking the root source of what keeps those people spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually imprisoned by the state of sin into which all humans are naturally born. Simply put, Jesus does not condemn people; He condemns institutions, or systems.

Now, before you insist that what I have just proposed is too absurd to believe, and you do so based on the idea that only people and not institutions or systems can go to Heaven or Hell, please keep the following in mind. There is an old adage, attributed to one Lord Acton, which states: Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Of this very thing Abraham Lincoln spoke when he wisely observed: “Nearly all men can stand adversity, but if you want to test a man’s character give him power.” If there is any truth to such statements, then what follows is also likely to be true: No individual in the history of mankind, that I know of, has ever been

corrupted by power while living alone on a desert island. It is therefore axiomatic that the power that both Acton and Lincoln were referring to is power that can only be exerted by an individual who exists within the matrix of an institution or system, whether it is political, economic, or religious in nature.

Now, mind you, I am not trying to say that individual humans are sinless just because they withdraw from the world and live on a desert island; that, sadly, is the fallacy of living the life of a hermit. What I am saying, though, is what any social psychologist will tell you. The typical individual left to his or her own devices is benign, but when you thrust that same individual into a decidedly hostile group, even if the sentiments and proclivities of that group are very different from that of the individual, a person will eventually succumb to the herd mentality and align themselves with the attitudes and beliefs of that group. Therein lies the logic of Jesus not condemning people so much as the system or institution that indoctrinates people with the attitudes or beliefs that He does condemn.

To see how all of this applies to the teachings of Scripture one need only turn to the words and actions of Jesus Himself. When the Pharisees came to Him demanding a sign to prove that He was the Messiah, Jesus flatly informed them: "An evil and adulterous generation insists on seeking signs, but none will be given to it except the sign of Jonah."⁴ First, notice how Jesus did not point an accusing finger at any of those individuals who were standing right in front of Him. Was it because He was too timid to accuse any single individual from within the group? Was He unsure of exactly who were the guilty ones among the demanding crowd? I hardly think so. What we have is simply a clear-cut example of what I am trying to point out. Jesus was less concerned about condemning individuals and more concerned with warning them about the kinds of attitudes and beliefs that they should avoid – attitudes and beliefs that only come as a result of associating with the institutions and systems that are united by like-minded individuals.

This becomes all the more evident when one takes the time to notice that Jesus did not say that a sign would be withheld from "them," that is, those "individuals" who made up the group that was addressing Him. What He did say was that a sign would be withheld from "it," that is, the "generation" that was demanding a sign from Him, which constitutes the world system, or present order. The same idea is expressed when Jesus spoke concerning those who believed in Him. "If you were of the world, the world would love you, but because you're not, the world hates you."⁵ The Greek word being used here for "world" is *kosmos*, the word we transliterate directly into English as *cosmos*, a word that literally means "something ordered," as in an "ordered system." So what we see here is Jesus choosing to condemn a world system that is alien to His way of thinking, as opposed to targeting the individuals who had fallen victim to that system by virtue of their simply being born into it.

Next, we see that when Jesus came to the Temple at Jerusalem, He famously drove out those who were buying and selling there, even going so far as to overturn the tables of the moneychangers. "It is written," He bellowed, "My house will be called a house of prayer, but you've turned it into a den of thieves!"⁶ What does this mean in the context of what I am trying to articulate by way of this disclaimer? Was Jesus condemning the people for the way they were presenting their offerings to God? Was He angry at the act of their buying and selling, as if one could actually buy or sell the favor of God with mere money? If so, then who did Jesus hold to be of greater guilt? Those who bought? Or those who sold? But, as usual, such a surface-oriented interpretation would miss the point entirely. Certainly, it was no more in the nature of Jesus to be angry with those buying *or* selling, any more than a doctor is angry with a patient for being sick. Undoubtedly, what disgusted Him was the fact that what had begun as a God-given impulse, that is, the desire to offer sacrifice to the Lord, had over time succumbed to the humanly-inspired forces that had crept in and undermined the original divinely-instituted purpose of giving the burnt offering. In other words, He was angry because what had begun as a sublime expression of a single heart offered to God had devolved as a result of the machinations of an institutionally-inspired

⁴ Matthew 12:38-39

⁵ John 15:19

⁶ Matthew 21:12-13

system.

This same process can be seen repeatedly down through the corridors of history, like “*déjà vu* all over again,” as it were. The Lord of the Harvest calls individual men and women of faith, who, in turn, teach their children the ways of God. In time, however, and always over the span of several generations, the ways of God are slowly but surely subverted, and in their place a mere shell of their original intention is all that remains. In the end, the faith of “the one” has become the dogma of “the institution,” which then creates a situation where God, as He does in every age, seeks the next individual who will heed the call in order to initiate the process all over again.

Therefore, when I attempt to convey the history of who decided which books should be excised from the Canon of Scripture, and in doing so, I quote certain ones who claim that “this person” belonging to “that religious group” made those decisions, remember I prefer to take to higher ground. And remember I, too, am less concerned by the actions of individuals and more interested in the process of institutionalization, which is constantly at work to undermine the original greatness of said person or group. In this, everyone is equally guilty or innocent, however the case may be, whether they are called Sethites, Semites, Hebrews, Israelites, Jews, Pharisees, Christians, Catholics, Protestants, Lutherans, Episcopalians, Methodists, Baptists, Presbyterians, Fundamentalists, *et al.*

In short, all these designations, in my view, are just like everything else in this God-ordained Universe of ours, which is to say, they are merely representative of both sides of the same coin. They are good when they willingly cooperate with the good as proscribed by the dictates of the One Who inspired their creation, and they are bad when they willingly succumb to the forces that forever seek to subvert the dictates of that same One. And because of this ironic nature of the human dilemma, I, for one, choose not to assign guilt or condemnation in regard to any of their particular actions; I only seek to report, impartially and with malice toward none.

Roll Call of the Intrepid

THE LAST THING I have to do before beginning is to express my gratitude to the intrepid pioneers who provided the core narratives for this work. Just in case anyone thinks that I have concocted the following storyline entirely on my own, I would like to offer this list of discoverers, translators, and scholars whose monumental contributions have provided the biblical texts that form its backbone. For a more in-depth look at their lives and accomplishments, please refer to the *Selected Biographies* section in *The Credits*.

Among the discoverers who have restored to the world such an unexpected array of lost manuscripts, there are: Johann Grynaeus (1540-1617), a Swiss Protestant divine, professor of *The New Testament*, and collector of biblical manuscripts; Giuseppe Assemani (1687-1768), a Lebanese Orientalist and Vatican librarian; James Bruce (1730-1794), a Scottish explorer and travel writer; and E.A. Wallis Budge (1857-1934), a British Egyptologist, Orientalist, philologist, and author.

Among the translators who have turned many of these manuscripts into works that could be understood by an English-speaking world, there are: William Wake (1657-1737), a British clergyman, dean at Exeter, bishop at Lincoln, and archbishop of Canterbury; Richard Laurence (1760-1838), a British Hebraist, Anglican churchman, and regius professor of Hebrew at Oxford; Moses Samuel (1795-1860), a British author and translator of Hebrew works; S.C. Malan (1812-1894), a British biblical scholar and linguist of Oriental languages; William Wright (1830-1889), a British Orientalist and professor of Arabic at Cambridge; B. Harris Cowper (1822-1904), a British archeologist, historian, and translator; W.R. Morfill (1834-1909), a British professor of Slavonic languages at Oxford; and R.H. Charles (1855-1931), an Irish biblical scholar and theologian.

Among the scholars who invested their considerable skill and effort into making the various manuscripts accessible to the general population, there are: Theophilus of Antioch (c. 120-181), a Syrian theologian, apologist, author, and chronologist; Julius Africanus (c. 160-240), a Libyan historian, traveler, and chronologist; Hippolytus of Rome (c. 170-235), a Greek theologian, apologist, and chronologist; Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306-373), a theologian, deacon, and hymn writer; Giambattista Vico (1668-1744), an Italian historian, political philosopher, and apologist of classical antiquity; George Smith (1800-1868), a British historian, theologian, and author; Joseph A. Seiss

(1823-1904), an American theologian, Lutheran minister, and author; E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913), a British clergyman and theologian; Louis Ginzberg (1873-1953), a Lithuanian professor of Judaism and Talmudist; Edgar J. Goodspeed (1871-1962), an American theologian and scholar of Greek and *The New Testament*; and Cyrus H. Gordon (1908-2001), an American biblical scholar and professor of ancient Near East culture and languages.

Thanks to the visionary efforts of “so great a cloud of witnesses,” then, I hereby present the following work; I now present *Tales of Forever: The Unfolding Drama of God’s Hidden Hand in History*.

ACT ONE

The great fragments of antiquity, previously useless to science because they lay neglected, broken, and scattered, shed great light when cleaned, pieced together, and set into place.

Giambattista Vico, *New Science*

THE PRELUDE

The important fact is ... that for 700 years after the commencement of the Christian Era ... the average estimation of the period from Adam to Christ was some 5,500 years.

Nathan Rouse, *A Dissertation on Sacred Chronology*

The Hidden Books

This Journey of Discovery

IN A WORLD WHERE evil so often triumphs over good, several burning questions linger in the face of such tragedy and despair. Is the God of *The Bible* really in control of human history as the Scriptures declare? And if He is, does He actually keep His promises to mankind?

Fortunately for us, these first two questions are inexorably bound together, and they are bound in the following manner. God’s control over history is clearly confirmed in direct proportion to His faithfulness to the promises He has made to humanity. In other words, in order to verify that God is in control, all one need do is confirm that He is faithful to the promises He makes. This leads us, then, to the next question, which is: Where does one look to confirm God’s faithfulness to His word of promise? Naturally, the obvious solution to a problem framed this way would be: I guess one finds the answer in *The Bible*, right? Needless to say, though, as both believers and skeptics have discovered, such a straightforward solution is much more elusive than that. To begin with, one must first ask: To which promise of God should we look to confirm this faithfulness? And having decided upon which promise, how do we go about establishing a clear-cut way to determine whether or not God has kept that promise?

To that end, it would be useful to focus our quest. By that I mean that, out of the countless promises that fill the pages of Holy Writ, it would help if we could narrow down our choice.

Fortunately, we do have the Apostle Paul to assist us in this matter. Speaking of Jesus, in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul said, “For all the promises of God find their ‘yes’ in Him.”⁷ Or as Weymouth’s *New Testament* puts it: “All the promises of God, whatever their number, have their confirmation in Him.”⁸ In other words, if one were to gather together every promise that God has ever made to His people, they could all be confirmed by the fact that His Son came into this world to live and die and resurrect just as had been predicted. Therefore, if this Advent of Christ can be adequately confirmed, then—based on this verse in *Corinthians*—every other promise in the book can be counted on as well.

That said, it should be the mission of every student of Scripture to determine the extent to which the promises of God have been fulfilled in the Incarnation of Christ. Admittedly, this is not the easiest thing to do, considering all the roadblocks that stand in the way of one’s quest for historical certainty. However, just because it is a difficult task does not mean that it is an impossible one. After all, although there are many pitfalls along the way, the God of *The Bible* does not hesitate to beckon us onward in this journey of discovery. Therefore, if one can appreciate that it is God Himself Who is guiding our quest, then it should come as no surprise that He is also the One Who has provided sufficient signposts to help us along the way.

With this in mind, one simply turns to the various ways in which *The Bible* portrays the manifestation of Christ in history, right? To which I must confess that—for me, at least—this is where things get a little tricky. Let me take a moment to explain what I mean by that.

A Body of Wisdom

NATURALLY, SPEAKING as I am from an admittedly Christian frame of reference, I do look to *The Bible* as one of several sources for such evidence—that is, the traditional *Bible*. But notice how I said the traditional *Bible*. The reason I say this is because after more than forty years of research, I have become convinced that there is another source of God-inspired wisdom that is just as capable of confirming the truth of the divine promise concerning the Advent of Christ. Make no mistake, though, I am not referring to any literary source that has not, at one point or another, been considered part of Holy Scripture. On the contrary, what I am referring to are books that were once considered inspired by God but which have, over the course of time, been excised from the canon of so-called “accepted texts,” generally for reasons that seem more motivated by the whims of politics than by the dictates of conscience.

I am referring to a body of ancient wisdom literature that has come to be known in modern parlance as the *pseudepigraphical* books of *The Bible*. *Pseudepigrapha*—chances are if you are neither a biblical scholar nor an archeology professor you may not even know what this word means or what it implies. According to the dictionary, the word is derived from two Greek words, *pseudo*, which means “false,” and *epigraphēin*, which means to “inscribe,” thus, “to write falsely.” By that definition, any book considered *pseudepigraphical* is one that is believed to be a “falsely attributed work,” that is to say, a work that erroneously purports to be written by some noteworthy biblical personage. As such, any book labeled as *pseudepigrapha* is to be discounted as being outside of the canon of books that have been deemed truly inspired by God. In addition to labeling these books as *pseudepigrapha*, they are often designated as “apocryphal” literature because a number of these titles remain in a separate section of *The Catholic Bible* and *The Greek Orthodox Bible* called *The Apocrypha*. Among these books are *The Wisdom of Solomon*, *The Epistle of Jeremiah*, *The Prayer of Manasseh*, *The Book of Judith*, and *The Second Book of Esdras*.

It is one of the great tragedies, in fact, in the history of *The Bible* that there is so much ignorance in regard to the peculiar assumption that we as a Western Protestant people received our Canon of Scripture like some hermetically-sealed document handed down from On-High. Fortunately, though, for the sake of those with the courage to examine this critical aspect of history, the work of intrepid scholars has greatly aided in dispelling such myopic thinking. Among them are Cyrus H. Gordon, professor of ancient Near East studies at Brandeis University, whose work

⁷ *Second Corinthians* 1:20

⁸ *ibid.* 1:20

shed much-needed new light on this age-old controversy. Said Gordon:

The Bible is of a complex composition, varying in scope according to the different ecclesiastical bodies. The Samaritans include only the Five Books of Moses in their *Bible*, and it is evident from *The Dead Sea Scrolls* that before the start of the Christian Era *The Pentateuch* was the most stabilized part of the Hebrew Scripture. Normative Judaism embraces the conventional *Pentateuch*, *Prophets*, and *Hagiographa* of the familiar *Old Testament*. *The Septuagint*, however, is far more inclusive, containing as it does, *Apocrypha* and *Pseudepigrapha*. Qumranite and other sectarian Jews possessed still other sacred writings. *Protestant Bibles* usually contain the normative *Jewish Old Testament* plus *The New Testament*; *Catholic Bibles* have, in addition, *The Apocryphal Books*. Various Eastern Orthodox Churches include different *Pseudepigrapha*. Accordingly, there is no one biblical corpus; and the component books of either *Testament* are in many cases extremely heterogeneous individually.⁹

Concerning the variegated process of the formation of our *Protestant Bible*, Edgar J. Goodspeed, described as “America’s greatest *New Testament* scholar,”¹⁰ pointed out:

The Apocrypha formed an integral part of the *King James Version* of 1611, as had all the preceding English versions from their beginning in 1382. But they are seldom printed as part of it any longer, still more seldom as part of the *English Revised Version*, and were not included in the American revision.

This is partly because the Puritans disapproved of them; they had already begun to drop them from printings of their *Geneva Bible* by 1600, and began to demand copies of the *King James Version* omitting them as early as 1629... We moderns discredit them because they were not part of *The Hebrew Bible*, and most of them have never been found in any Hebrew forms at all.

But they were part of *The Bible* of the early Church, for it used the *Greek Version* of *The Jewish Bible*, which we call *The Septuagint*, and these books were all in that version. They passed from it into Latin and the great Latin *Bible* edited by St. Jerome about 400 A.D., *The Vulgate*, which became the authorized *Bible* of Western Europe and England, and remained so for a thousand years. But Jerome found that they were not in *The Hebrew Bible*, and so he called them *Apocrypha*, the hidden, or secret, books.¹¹

The Apocrypha, however, does not contain all of the books included in the pantheon of apocryphal literature. Most notable among the other titles are *The First Book of Adam and Eve*, *The First Book of Enoch*, *The Secrets of Enoch*, *The Book of Jasher*, *The Book of Jubilees*, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, *The Letters of Herod and Pilate*, and *The Gospel of Nicodemus*.

Grounds for Exclusion

OVER THE YEARS many reasons have been offered to justify the rejection of any book that is no longer found in many of our modern versions of *The Bible*. Chief among them are: One, they were written under assumed names; two, they contain historical errors; three, they were not quoted by Jesus; and four, they contain no prophetic elements. Yet ironically, these same objections, which seem to confirm the correctness of rejecting the apocryphal books, have also been leveled against the very books that reside in the accepted Canon of Scripture.

For example, regarding *The Pentateuch*, or the first five books of *The Old Testament*, critics

⁹ *The Common Background of Greek and Hebrew Civilizations*, Cyrus H. Gordon; W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1965, p. 278

¹⁰ *Edgar Johnson Goodspeed: Articulate Scholar*, James I. Cook; Scholars Press, 1981, p. X

¹¹ *The Apocrypha: An American Translation*, Edgar J. Goodspeed; Vintage Books, 1989, p. v

have often doubted the Mosaic authorship of *The Book of Genesis*. As their argument goes: While the last four books could have been written by Moses by virtue of the fact that he lived during the years described by the text, he certainly could not have been around to witness the events depicted in the first book. Yet according to most biblical scholars: "Long before the first century A.D., Moses was declared the author of *Genesis*, and Josephus, the first-century Jewish historian, in keeping with this tradition, accepted Mosaic authorship."¹²

Still other books in *The Old Testament* have had their authorship called into question, such as *Isaiah*, *Ezekiel*, and *Daniel*. Because they so precisely predict future events, these books, critics insist, must have been published after the fact and therefore must have been written under assumed names. Similarly, certain books in *The New Testament* have in recent times come under fire concerning their genuine authorship. Most notably are those attributed to the Apostles Peter and Paul. According to much modern-day scholarship, both epistles of Peter and several letters of Paul were allegedly written as amalgamations by authors other than the ones to which Scripture has subscribed. Yet the simple fact is, though the identities of many of the best-known biblical authors remain subject to such doubt and speculation, the books that bear their names are still regarded as integral to *The Holy Bible*.

As far as rejecting certain books because they contain historical errors, again I should point out that this same argument applies to texts well within the accepted limits of scriptural sanctity. And again one need only turn to the first book in Scripture to prove my point, because as many biblical scholars are well aware it has been a longstanding bone of contention that the account of Noah's gathering of the animals into the Ark contains two contradictory versions. In one rendition, the animals enter in pairs,¹³ while in another, they enter in groups of seven.¹⁴

The same thing occurs in *The New Testament* regarding Judas Iscariot, whose infamous demise is reported in two separate yet contradictory accounts. In *Matthew*, it is said that a grief-stricken Judas hung himself after betraying Jesus,¹⁵ while *Acts* has him falling headlong into a field and being disemboweled in the process.¹⁶ Naturally, scholars are quick to point out the various ways in which such contradictions can be logically reconciled, and justifiably so. Yet this still does not change the fact that there are obvious contradictions to be found in the received texts, which if they were found in books that critics were seeking to excise would be considered clear grounds for exclusion...

So ends this preview of *Tales of Forever: The Unfolding Drama of God's Hidden Hand in History*. To read further, please get the whole book, which has graciously been made available here on this website.

¹² *The Criswell Study Bible*, W.A. Criswell (Editor); Criswell Center for Biblical Studies, 1979, p. 1

¹³ *Genesis* 6:19-20

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 7:2-3

¹⁵ *Matthew* 27:5

¹⁶ *Acts* 1:18