Brief Help in Reading *THE BIBLE: An Introduction*

THE BIBLE: An Introduction (Third Edition, Jerry L. Sumney, Fortress Press, 2021) is a textbook which provides an overview of some Biblical matters, while also promoting ideas that are hard to reconcile with the Christian faith. Following are some considerations as you read it.

The textbook views Scripture on a natural level as explained in the epilogue and in the comments on inspiration in chapter 3. It treats Scripture as only human thought that developed over time. This is not how the Bible views itself, because it claims to be from God. Its authors often say "thus says the LORD" and Jesus quotes Deuteronomy that the Scriptures are from God's mouth (Heb. 1:1, Matt. 4:4, 2 Tim 3:16). However, the textbook takes a skeptic's view of the Scriptures. As you read the textbook, you will find it:

1. Does not consider the Bible as being from God
2. Implies the Bible is historically inaccurate without giving a basis
3. Drives the idea of genre in an unreasonable way
4. Presses readers to feel we need to apologize for the Bible
5. Makes many statements without providing a basis (be like the people in Berea who examined what Paul said to see if it was accurate; Acts 16)
6. Denies fulfilled prophecy (like Isaiah 53 being about Jesus)
7. Charges writers as frauds without giving a real basis
8. Charges New Testament writers with reading new meanings into Old Testament Scriptures to have them point to Jesus
9. Claims to know why books were written while giving little basis

Because the book does not offer balancing thoughts, some are provided in the following table. Resources listed at the end should help build your confidence in the Bible as being from God Himself.

Some Considerations related to Textbook Statements

Statement	Page	Consideration
Israel didn't have written Scriptures until King Josiah	7	Scripture must have been written since they found it. Moses and Joshua had it. Dt 31:9, Josh 1:8
2 Timothy 3:16-17 says Scripture is useful, not that it is inspired	34-35	Inspired is the basis for it being useful. Many Scriptures show the Bible is God-breathed. 2 Pt 1:21
Paul did not read Scripture for its literal sense	37	He speaks of Adam, the fall, Abram literally. Gal 3:16 is literal
The Scriptures have inconsistencies and inaccuracies, including historical and factual errors	37-38, 106	No basis given. Scriptures have proven accurate repeatedly. See Resources.
The Pentateuch is not historical. Genesis is "scientifically and historically inaccurate"	52, 55	Gen 5 genealogy reads as history. Jesus read Gen 1-2 as historical. Gives no basis to say inaccurate
Sodom was not judged for homosexuality	69-70	Jude says "sexual perversion… gone after strange flesh"
The Scriptures are "disturbing"	109-110	Using emotional pressure to get readers on the defensive
Moses did not write the Pentateuch	53, 99	Jesus said he did. Jn 5:46 No reason to think otherwise.
The named prophets did not actually write their books	142	Jesus would not affirm a fraud by calling Daniel a prophet Mt 24:15
Isaiah was written by three people	148	John 12:37-41 quotes Isa 6 and 53 as being by Isaiah; it is one book in Dead Sea Scrolls
No prophet "made direct predictions about Jesus"	149	Many prophecies fulfilled: where born, when come, how die. Micah 5:2, Dan 9:25-26, Isa 53
Isaiah 53 is "clearly not about Jesus"	151	Read Isa 53 and you see Jesus. Philip knew it was. Acts 8
Zechariah "adjusts the expectations of Haggai"	162	Zech and Haggai prophesied at same time; do not contradict
"Jonah is not a historical figure"	164	Jesus refers to him as historical like Solomon Lk 11:29-32
Daniel was written in the 160s BC not the 500s	167	Claimed because not believe predictive prophecy, yet Daniel prophecies fulfilled thru AD 70
The Scriptures are "developing" ideas of men	157, 167	They are God's revelation. God has communicated.
"Job is probably not a historical person"	177	No basis. James and Ezekiel refer to him as real.
Esther is a "clearly fictional tale"	184	Based in history; led to a feast
With 12 types of psalms, none are Messianic	192-194	Ps 2, 22 and 110 clearly point to Messiah

Statement	Page	Consideration
"The gospels are not eyewitness accounts"	246	No basis given
The gospel writers wrote to "interpret" stories not to give "accurate accounts of facts"	247, 248	Read Luke 1:1-4 about his research intent and quality
The gospels were written to promote things that "fit what the church came to say about Jesus"	265	No real basis. Gospels were written within a couple decades of Jesus.
Christians say "Christ came to free people from keeping God's law"	270	We are not under law because we can live by the Spirit inside. Rm 8
Matthew "finds new meaning" in OT prophecies	272	Prophecies clearly speak of Christ, e.g. Ps 2, Isa 53, Dan 9
The Hebrew Bible does not have "predictions that prove who Jesus was"	274	OT has clear Messiah predictions Ps 2, when come Dan 9:25-26, how die Isa 53, Ps 22
John did not write John	288	More reasonable to accept John the apostle wrote it
John inserted things into Jesus' life that seem "unlikely"	293	Basis given not convincing; Jesus was persecuted even to death
Acts is not historically accurate	300	Has been verified by history and archaeology
NT letters were for culture-specific settings, so should not be applied to ourselves	317	1 Corin is to all believers everywhere. Paul says he taught the same in all churches. 1 Cor 4:17
Romans was written to win over the church to Paul	342	No basis. Romans presents God's gospel clearly (1:1, 16)
Many letters written in Paul's name weren't written by Paul	353	No solid basis given
Thessalonians knew the "man of lawlessness" since he lived during the first century	357	They knew who Paul was referring to, because he had taught them from Daniel
Writer of 1 Timothy gave commands "repressive" to woman that Paul did not give in earlier letters	363	1 Timothy 2 aligns with 1 Corinthians 14 regarding women; Both are based on creation order
Hebrews doesn't says Christianity is better than other religions	372	The point of Hebrews is Christ is better. "Better" is a key word
James intentionally opposed Paul in saying faith without works is dead	374	Paul urges good works of believers like James. See Eph 2, Titus 3.
"Jude writes against people who do not keep enough of the law"	380	Basis not convincing. Love-feasts don't have to be Mosaic feasts.
Prophecy is "predicting the past"	390	Based on unbelief not history. Daniel prophecies fulfilled up thru AD 70. God knows the future
Revelation "says nothing about an antichrist"	408	The specific title is not used, but Rev 13 "beast" aligns with prophecies of antichrist such as 2 Thess 2, Dan 7, 9

It will be helpful to keep in mind that the Scriptures have been demonstrated to be divine as seen in realities such as:

1. Fulfilled prophecy
2. Historical accuracy demonstrated repeatedly
3. Archaeological confirmations
4. Divine consistency though written by 40 authors over a 1500-year period
5. Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead
6. Transformed lives by the gospel

Some Suggested Resources to Help You

1. **The Bible** – Read it yourself. Don't just listen to others talk about it.
2. **Faithful people you know** who have a demonstrated walk with God
3. **Archaeology:** Expedition Bible and Associates for Biblical Research
4. **Canon and Historical Accuracy:** *Where Did the New Testament Come From?* by Professor David Gooding – available for free on Myrtlefield Trust website
5. **Claimed Contradictions:** Got Questions website
6. **Daniel's Prophecies:** Encourage Depending on YouTube
7. **Other YouTube Resources:**
   a. God is Not a Monster - Uplook
   b. Evidence for the Bible - Mike Winger
   c. Progressive Christians Are The Modern Sadducees - Mike Winger
   d. How Do We Know Who Wrote the Bible? – Cross Examined
   e. Back Story about How We Really Got Our Bible – Allan Parr
   f. Why You Can Rely On the Canon – Dr. Krueger
   g. The Reliability of the Bible – Genesis Apologetics

Chapter-by-Chapter notes are available at www.EncourageDepending.com