

We Can KNOW That the Bible Is the Word of God—Inspiration

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Introduction

No doctrine is more fundamental to true religion than that of the inspiration of the Bible. Rejection of the Bible's inspiration is tantamount to rejection of the Bible itself, and therefore, rejection of the religion and of the God Whom it claims as its source. If the true and living God did not reveal His will by means of the Bible, there is simply no basis for true religion. Therefore, rejection of the Bible's claim to have been written by men peculiarly inspired by God leaves the innate religious inclinations of mankind in the realm of mere subjective superstitions.

An ever-growing matrix of unbelief spanning several generations now has produced the politically correct, pluralistic, hypersensitive (toward everyone but Bible believers, of course) climate of the times. This philosophy pontificates that all religions, all "holy books," all "prophets," and all gods are equally legitimate and/or illegitimate. The one exception most elitist humanistic philosophers make to their polytheistic mantra is Christianity, which they downgrade to a sub-pagan level. (Criticize Jesus Christ and the Bible if you want the praise of media moguls, Hollywood hedonists, cowardly clerics, and pernicious politicians, but you dare not criticize Mohammed and the Koran, the B'hais, or the Hindus.)

Ironically, the Bible remains the most purchased, given, owned, and circulated book of all time, while it is likely also the least read, believed, and followed. Those who reject the Bible as God's Word do not do so for want of evidence, but because they choose to reject the evidence. The evidence cries out that God inspired the Bible writers and that it is therefore the Word of God.

Inspiration—Plenary and Verbal

A brief definition of terms is in order. As with several other Biblical terms (e.g., *love*, *faith*, *miracle*, et. al.), *inspired* and *inspiration* have been prostituted in common parlance. Some refer to the literary works of Shakespeare as "inspired." When a listener is especially impressed with a sermon, he may tell the preacher, "Your sermon was really inspired." By such statements they intend to indicate that one has produced something extraordinary.

The Scriptures are indeed extraordinary, but their absolute uniqueness cannot be explained by attributing them to the genius of mere men. The doctrine of **inspiration** concerning the Scriptures claims God as their source. While this doctrine appears constantly

throughout the Scriptures, ironically, the word *inspiration* appears but twice in the KJV. Job 32:8 states: “But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.” Paul’s declaration to Timothy is more familiar: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). The word translated “inspiration” means “God-breathed,” thus spoken or communicated by God. The human writers, therefore, were simply the conduits through whom God gave His message to men.

This inspiration is **plenary** (from a Latin word meaning “full” or “complete”), as indicated by *all scripture*. *Scripture* primarily refers to the Old Testament Scriptures in 2 Timothy 3:16. However, the term is likewise inclusive of any and all additional revelation God was even then giving and that He would continue to give until His revelation was complete (1 Cor. 13:10–13; Eph. 4:11–13; Jude 3). It is clear that the New Testament writers were aware that they were producing inspired Scripture (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:15–16). Some want to attribute inspiration, and thus inerrancy, only to parts of the Bible (e.g., its statements on morality and salvation), while denying inspiration to other parts (e.g., its historical, geographical, scientific, et al., content). But the Bible cannot rightly be taken piecemeal—it is all or nothing relating to inspiration. *Plenary inspiration* simply refers to the affirmation that the Scriptures are inspired in all of their parts and subjects.

Bible inspiration is also **verbal** (i.e., in its words). Some profess to believe in the inspiration of Scripture, but when pressed they mouth something about guidance of its authors in their “basic themes” or “thoughts.” This concept is incompatible with Paul’s doctrine. After declaring that the wisest and most powerful men could not know God’s plan for the redemption of man, he then explained:

But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.... Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words (1 Cor. 2:10, 13).

Note first that the apostle attributed his teachings to God, Who revealed them through the Holy Spirit. Then He said that the Spirit taught him (Paul) his very words. Mere “thought inspiration” would have left its recipients subject to considerable subjective interpretation in communicating those thoughts. Only if God gave the very **words** could the message of these men be vouchsafed as the inerrant Word of God.

Bible Claims of Inspiration

The Old Testament contains hundreds of statements such as “Thus saith Jehovah” and “The word of Jehovah came unto me,” each of which is a claim of inspiration. The New Testament makes numerous inspiration claims besides those cited above. Jesus explicitly promised inspiration to the apostles on the occasion of their appointment:

But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you (Mat. 10:19–20; cf. 18:18).

As the Lord tried to ready the apostles for His departure from them, He further emphasized the help He would send them for their work:

But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you.... Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come (John 14:26; 16:13).

Paul claimed inspiration as the source of his first Corinthian letter: “If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord” (14:37). Peter classified Paul’s epistles as Scripture:

Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles,...which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:15–16).

Peter also stated the means by which the prophets received their messages: “For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Pet. 1:21). It is on the basis of God’s being the source of the written Word that the Scripture writers issued numerous, repeated warnings against changing Scripture in any degree (e.g., Gal. 1:8–9; Rev. 22:18–19; et al.).

How Can We Know?

Admittedly, claims are not in themselves evidences of inspiration. As stated earlier, however, abundant evidence exists to substantiate the consistent assertion of Scripture that God is its source. These proofs include the following characteristics of the Bible:

- **Unity:** Although written over a period of at least fifteen hundred years by about forty men from varied places, times, occupations, and languages, the Bible’s library of sixty-six books verily constitutes one book with one theme—the fall and redemption of mankind. Their

message is one harmonious whole, an impossible achievement apart from a master designer and design—feats of which no mortal is capable.

- **Accuracy of detail:** The Bible is not a history, geography, or science textbook, but where it touches on these subjects, it is always accurate. Archaeology continues to affirm the Bible's historical and geographical accuracy. It stated scientific principles and realities unknown and unknowable by men centuries before technology and invention enabled scientists to discover them.
- **Prophetic accuracy:** Bible prophecy is often explicit in details of time, persons, and circumstances and spans periods ranging from one day to hundreds of years. These are fulfilled without fail. The only prophecies that have not been fulfilled are ones whose time has not come (e.g., The Lord's Second Coming).
- **Miraculous activity:** The messengers of God and authors of the Bible had their message repeatedly confirmed by miracles they were enabled to perform (1 King. 18:20-39; Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4; et al.).
- **Indestructibility:** Satan and all his minions have opposed the Bible ever since Moses wrote the first word of Genesis. Despite all their best efforts to destroy it they have not been able to do so, and they never shall: "The word of the Lord abideth forever" (1 Pet. 1:24).

Jesus' View of Scripture

Various other considerations forcefully argue the impossibility of the Bible's having been produced by mere men. However, the following should be conclusive to any objective observer: the testimony of Jesus Christ. Jesus claimed to be a direct messenger from God in a sense that no prophet before him had ever been or claimed to be. He was the Christ—the Anointed One—of God. He claimed to be an infallible teacher. He certified His claims by His repeated proofs of dominance over every realm men could experience (psychic, physical, natural, spiritual).

Nicodemus responded correctly to the Lord's mighty works: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2; cf. 9:32-33). As Peter told the Jews on Pentecost, Jesus of Nazareth was "a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). Furthermore, He did His signs for the express purpose of producing faith that He was Who He said He was and that He could do what He said He came to do (John 20:30-31).

Numerous details of Jesus' birth, life, teachings, death, resurrection, and ascension were foretold in over three hundred Old Testament prophecies. The ultimate miracle that forever

seals the fact of His identity and veracity is His resurrection, which the apostles also convincingly preached on Pentecost (Acts 2:24-37).

All of the foregoing things being true, Jesus' evaluation of Scripture should carry the greatest possible weight. One does not read far in the Gospel accounts before seeing His estimate of it. Every statement He made in reference to the Bible either explicitly or implicitly expressed His absolute reverence for and confidence in it. Every utterance concerning Scripture seemed calculated to elicit in His hearers' respect for and submission to its counsels. He attributed accuracy and authenticity to its historical records reaching all the way back to the creation account and the murder of Abel. Modernists ridicule the account of a universal flood, but Jesus relied on it. He cited the Old Testament description of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as trustworthy. Skeptics laugh at the record of Jonah and the great fish, but not Jesus. His statement to His Father in prayer says it all: "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

Some may argue that His statements relate to the Old Testament alone, since this is the only Bible He had. My response is that whatever His attitude toward the Scripture that **had been** written was His attitude toward that which He knew **would be** written by the men whom He inspired. What they "bound" (taught, commanded) on Earth would be only that which He had already "bound" (authorized) in Heaven (for so the verb tenses of Mat. 18:18 indicate). The Holy Spirit would guide them into all the Truth (John 16:13), which would constitute Scripture of the very same character – and from the same source – as the Law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms (Luke 24:44).

Conclusion

If one doubts that the Bible is the very Word of God, then He must reject the Deity claims of Jesus of Nazareth – He cannot be the sinless Son of God while being deceived Himself and deceiving us about the Bible. Contrariwise, if one genuinely joins Peter's confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God" (Mat. 16:16), he must genuinely accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Investment of belief in the Sacred Word demands one's submission to its precepts and prohibitions: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). If we can **know** that Jesus is the Christ, we can **know** that the Bible is the Word of God.

[**Note:** I wrote this MS, and it originally appeared as an "Editorial Perspective" in the August 2002 issue of *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL*, a 36-page monthly of which I was editor at the time.]

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