

Evidences of 'inspiration'

A. Introduction to evidences

1. This topic really belongs in a series on apologetics, though we will say a little simply by way of an introduction to evidences commonly presented in defence of the integrity of the Scriptures.
2. Some lines of defence are certainly more sustainable than others, so we should seriously consider the validity and implications of any arguments used in defence of the existence of God, the historicity of his Son or the integrity of the words of his Spirit.
3. A good argument is worth putting forward, a poor argument only undermines the credibility of the good ones.
4. I am simply presenting these arguments as they are normally presented, without any significant comment. Some I would not use.

B. Expectations

1. If the claims for 'inspiration' are true then we would have certain expectations about the Bible:
 - a) We would expect to be able to understand the Bible.
 - b) We would expect the Bible to be self-consistent and non-contradictory.
 - c) We would expect the Bible to be in harmony with facts of science, history and geography.
 - d) We would expect the Bible to meet our spiritual needs.
 - e) We would expect the Bible to be able to bear close examination by its critics.
 - f) We would expect the Bible to be universally authoritative.
2. When we examine the evidence that supports the Bible's claim for 'inspiration' we find that the Bible does meet all of our expectations. The only adequate explanation for the existence of the Bible is that it is of divine origin.

C. The indestructibility of the Bible

1. The Bible has successfully withstood the efforts of its critics and enemies to destroy it.
 - a) Jeremiah 36 – when King Jehoiakim burned the message delivered by Jeremiah, God simply told Jeremiah to write it again. (see verses 1-4, 20-23, 27-28).
 - b) 2nd Century BC - the Syrian King, Antiochus Epiphanes, waged a campaign against the Jews and ordered the destruction of copies of the Law.

- c) 4th century AD - the Roman Emperor Diocletian persecuted the followers of Christ and ordered the destruction of all copies of the Scriptures. 25 years later, under the Emperor Constantine, an order was issued to prepare 50 copies of the scriptures, to be produced at 'government expense.'
 - d) 16th century - when copies of William Tyndale's English translation of the New Testament were brought into England, the religious authorities ordered that they be confiscated and burnt. Tyndale's translation went on to become the basis of the popular King James Version.
2. The Bible has survived all of these campaigns to destroy and discredit it. If it were just an ordinary book, could it have survived such concerted opposition to it? The indestructibility of the Bible is best explained if it is the Word of God. 1 Peter 1:23,25; Hebrews 4:12. The word of God is living and abides forever.

D. The unity and harmony of the Bible

- 1. The 66 books that make up the Bible were written by about 40 writers over a period of some 1500 years. The writers were from a diverse range of backgrounds and circumstances (educated and uneducated, high ranking and lowly, wealthy and poor), the books were written in different places and in different styles (law, history, poetry, wisdom, letters, apocalyptic) yet despite this diversity the books possess a remarkable degree of unity and harmony in thought and teaching.
- 2. A central, unifying theme runs throughout the Bible: God's desire to re-establish a relationship with mankind following the introduction of sin. The Bible tells of God's plan and purpose to bring about this new relationship, culminating in the coming of Jesus. Jesus is the unifying theme of the Bible (see Luke 24:44; Acts 8:35). The Bible speaks of a universal problem: sin. And a universal solution: Jesus Christ.
- 3. A book that possesses such unity amidst its diverse origins is best explained as the word of God. There is one mind behind the Bible, the mind of God.
- 4. Alleged contradictions can often be adequately explained as a failure to understand the structure of the Bible or as a misunderstanding of the text or, occasionally, by human error in the transmission or translation of the text.

E. The accuracy of the Bible

- 1. In all areas where it can be tested by external sources the Bible is shown to be accurate.
- 2. The Bible is geographically accurate.
- 3. The Bible is historically and culturally accurate.
- 4. The Bible, whilst being written in a pre-scientific age, is in harmony with good science. There is nothing in the Bible that contradicts true scientific discoveries.

5. In particular, archaeology supports the accuracy of the Bible and the credibility of the writers. In many cases archaeology has disproved the arguments of the Bible's critics.
 - a) At one time critics said Moses could not have written anything because writing was unknown in his time, but archaeology has shown that writing pre-dates the time of Moses.
 - b) The existence of the Hittite nation was disputed in the 18th and 19th centuries – there was no archaeological evidence. But then discoveries were made in Turkey of a powerful Hittite civilisation. And so on ...

F. The miracles of the Bible

1. The miracles recorded in the Old Testament and the New Testament confirms God as the source of the message.
2. Since the Bible is trustworthy and credible in so many areas (history, geography, etc.) it follows that its accounts of the miracles must also be credible and trustworthy.
3. The miracles were performed and recorded to confirm the truth of the message and to produce faith: Hebrews 2:1-4; John 3:1-2; 1 Kings 18:22-24; Mark 16:20.

G. The fulfilment of prophecy

1. The prophecies and their fulfilment add further support to the view that the Bible is the 'inspired' word of God.
2. Prophecy is not guesswork. The events predicted must be remote enough in time and sufficiently detailed to eliminate the possibility of guesswork.
3. The fulfilment of prophecy is often verified by history and archaeology, e.g. the destruction of Tyre (Ezekiel 26-27), the destruction of Babylon (Isaiah 13; 47).
4. The Old Testament contains many prophecies about Christ (over 300 have been identified). These include: his place of birth (Micah 5:2); the manner of his birth (Isaiah 7:14); his death (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53); his resurrection (Psalm 16:8-10). The fulfilment of these prophecies is to be seen in the events recorded in the New Testament, 500-1,000 years after the original prophecies were made.
5. The precise fulfilment of all these prophecies could not have happened by chance; there must have been a superior mind guiding the writers of these prophecies, one who had all knowledge.

H. The Bible's continuing relevance to human needs

1. The Bible meets the spiritual and moral needs of humankind in every age and generation.
2. It satisfies our longing for answers to basic questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? What is the purpose of life? Is there life after death? What hope do we have for the future?

3. It satisfies our longing for knowledge about God (Psalm 42:1-2). It satisfies our longing for justice – to know that wrongs will be put right, that evil shall not prevail.
4. The message of the Bible is universal – it is for all people of the world (Acts 1:8; Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19). The Bible is read by more people and published in more languages than any other book.
5. The words of the Bible provide comfort and encouragement for people in times of suffering and trouble.

I. The Bible's impartiality

1. The Bible is impartial and honest in its depiction of human characters. It records the failures and weaknesses of its great characters, e.g. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Peter. We are given impartial, balanced accounts of their lives.
2. It is honest in its record of Israel's history and unfaithfulness. The human tendency would be to gloss over the failures and present a more positive view of history.
3. See Egyptian king list x2
 - a) From the temple of Ramesses II at Abydos. But it is notable for its omission of four rulers including: Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) and Tutankhamun.
 - b) Likely due to association with Armarna Heresy <
 - c) And all of this stands in stark contrast with what is, I believe, the only truly reliable historical record – that found in the Scriptures. If the nation of Israel were writing their own history, do we really think that it would paint them to be most rebellious, ungrateful, two-timing, losers that we read of throughout the Biblical record? The no-holds barred version of Israelite history recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures – one which you may recall Stephen using against his own people in the book of Acts – is a powerful testimony to its authenticity.
4. It is honest in its depiction of conditions in the early assemblies of believers – it talks about the problems affecting those communities.

J. The brevity and restraint of the Bible

1. The Bible does not yield to human curiosity or human words. If the Bible was a purely human production it would be much longer than it is.
2. Major events are recorded with brevity and conciseness: the creation of the world, the birth of Jesus, his crucifixion, his resurrection. These things are recorded in a simple matter-of-fact way.
3. The Bible is selective in what it records (John 20:30-31; 21:25). It does not record anything about the childhood and early years of Jesus' life. It tells us very little about what most of the apostles did after the ascension of Jesus.

4. The Bible writers fulfilled the purpose God had in mind for their writings: to provide us with all that we need for life and godliness (2 Peter 1:3). All that God has given us in his word is sufficient for all of our needs (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

K. The great teachings of the Bible

1. The great teachings of the Bible suggest to us its divine origin.
2. What the Bible teaches about God (the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit), what it teaches about the nature of humankind, what it teaches about our responsibilities and obligations, its high moral standards (holiness), are all things that could not have been thought up by people alone.
3. When we compare the teachings of the Bible to the teachings of people we see the superiority of the Bible. When the Jews heard Jesus teach they were astonished at his teaching (Matthew 7:28-29).

L. The alternative

1. If the Bible is not the word of God, if God did not write the Bible, then how do we explain its origin?
2. Charles Wesley considered the options:
 - a) The Bible must be the invention of good men or angels, bad men or devils, or of God.
 - b) It could not be the invention of good men or angels; for they neither would or could make a book, and tell lies all the time they were writing it, saying, "Thus saith the Lord," when it was their own invention.
 - c) It could not be the invention of bad men or devils; for they would not make a book which commands all duty, forbids all sin, and condemns their souls to hell to all eternity.
 - d) Therefore I draw this conclusion, that the Bible must be given by divine inspiration.¹

M. Summary

1. Taken together, these evidences for the 'inspiration' of the Bible can form a persuasive argument that the Bible is truly what it claims to be: the word of God.

¹ From Burtner and Chiles, *A Compend of Wesley's Theology*, quoted in Geisler and Nix, 1986: 199