

Preserved Text-v2. Inspiration

Here I am again in the name of the Sovereign Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord Jesus Christ. Continuing with the preliminary considerations, I will start with Inspiration

When I write a book, [I have published seven, so far, plus a Greek Text.] I identify myself as the author, and usually give some indication as to my purpose in writing it. As a Christian, I was taught that our Bible (containing 66 'books') is a written Revelation given by the Sovereign Creator. So I ask: does the Bible identify itself, does it claim to be divinely inspired? I begin with the claim, and then attempt to verify it.

The claim

Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth". The only One who could pass this information on to Adam (as I assume) was the Creator Himself; the Author is identifying Himself. Adam certainly developed a written form for the language God gave him, and he would have made a written record of all that the Creator told him about the beginning of this planet. Hundreds, if not thousands, of times throughout the Bible we encounter "God said", or "the Lord said". The prophetic books expressly claim to be messages given by God. Here is just one example: "The word of the LORD that came to Micah of Moresheth in the days of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah" (Micah 1:1).

Psalms 138:2, "You have magnified Your word above all Your name". Since a person's name represents that person, the point of that statement would appear to be that God's word represents His person even better than does His name. "Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). If the word is in heaven, then it must be God's, and only an eternal Being could produce an eternal word. 1 Peter 1:25 quotes Isaiah 40:8, "the word of the LORD endures forever", and there are a number of further passages that say essentially the same thing. Again, only an eternal Being could produce an eternal word.

Matthew 5:18, "assuredly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota nor one tittle shall pass away from the Law until everything happens". Sovereign Jesus is making a statement about the preservation through time of the precise form of the Sacred Text. Only a maximum Authority could guarantee something like that. "All Scripture is God-breathed" (2 Timothy 3:16). Paul coins an expression to describe the intimate connection between God and His written Revelation; it is like His very breath.

Romans 14:24, “Now to Him who has power to establish you according to my Gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept secret through long ages, 25 but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God, with a view to obedience of faith among all ethnic nations.” Since it is being revealed only ‘now’, these ‘prophetic Scriptures’ must be New Testament writings, given by God! [5.2% of the Greek manuscripts place verses 24-26 at the end of the book, rather than here. Paul habitually places doxologies throughout his letters—they do not occur only at the end.]

2 Peter 1:20-21, “knowing this first, that no Prophecy of Scripture comes to be from private release; for no Prophecy ever came by the will of man, rather holy men of God spoke as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Here we have an impressive description of the process of Inspiration. [The word rendered “release” occurs only here in the New Testament, but the basic meaning of the root is ‘to loose’ or ‘release’. With reference to a prophetic word, it could refer either to its enunciation/origination or to its interpretation. Verse 21 makes clear that here it is the origination. False or fake prophecies derive from the will of the ‘prophet’ (or demonic influence), but true prophecy never does.] Going on, I like the definition of the Scriptures that we find in Romans 2:20—“having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and truth”. Who but the Sovereign Creator could produce a written Revelation that embodies knowledge and truth. I take it that the declarations I have cited affirm the existence of a written Revelation, but they do not give us the identity of the inspired writings that make up that revelation, the composition of the Canon. I will take up that question in its turn.

The evidence

I consider that I have dealt adequately with the claim, so I now move on to the evidences, or the verification. A literature that claims supernatural origin should be intrinsically supernatural and should produce supernatural results. I will begin with the supernatural results, which will also tell us something about the Creator’s purpose in giving the Revelation.

Paul wrote to Timothy: “from infancy you have known the Sacred Scriptures which are able to make you wise into salvation through the faith that is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching, for reproof, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be fully competent, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:15-17). Certainly one of the most important purposes is to show how to obtain eternal salvation. Paul goes on to say that Scripture is valuable

for four things. Notice the sequence: 1) the Scripture provides objectively true information; 2) then the Holy Spirit uses His Sword to convict of sin; 3) this leads to repentance and conversion; 4) then the Word is our food and water for spiritual growth. (Access to Scripture is necessary for spiritual growth and work.) As we grow, we can help others move through the sequence. A very great many Christians, from around the world, have found the above to be true in their personal experience.

Hebrews 4:12-13, “the Word of God is living and efficient, and sharper than any two-edged sword, actually penetrating to the point of separating soul and spirit, joints and marrow; in fact, it is able to evaluate a heart’s reflections and intentions. Nothing in all creation is hidden from His sight; rather all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

Meditating on God’s Word can be rather uncomfortable; it is a ‘mirror’ that tells us the truth about ourselves (James 1:25). Ephesians 6:17 calls it “the sword of the Spirit”. A word that can separate soul from spirit must be supernatural. (If soul and spirit can be separated, they obviously cannot be the same thing, just as joints and marrow are not the same thing.) A very great many Christians, from around the world, have found the above to be true in their personal experience. Returning to Hebrews 4:13, we must give an account to a Judge who knows ALL the facts. This knowledge really ought to turn us into serious people, diligent seekers of God, but

“This Book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success” (Joshua 1:8). James 1:25 says something very similar. Moses said to the Israelites: “Set your hearts on all the words which I testify among you today, which you shall command your children to be careful to observe—all the words of this law. For it is not a futile thing for you, because it is your life” (Deuteronomy 32:46-47). A very great many Christians, from around the world, have found the above to be true in their personal experience. (Recall that I am presenting the evidence, the effect that Inspiration produces.)

Romans 1:16-17, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, because it is the power of God for the salvation of each one who believes (for the Jew first, then the Greek); because in it God’s righteousness is revealed, from faith to faith; just as it is written: ‘The righteous one will live by faith’.” The Gospel is the power for the salvation. As Sovereign Jesus said in John 14:6—“I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” There are not many ways, only one. Returning to Romans 1:16, where did Paul get the idea of ‘shame’? A world controlled by Satan does all it can to cow any

who dare to proclaim the Truth. Paul cites Habakkuk 2:4. To 'live by faith' you must move from one exercise of faith to another. Millions of lives have been transformed by the power of God's Word; so where did that power come from?

The inspiration of the Sacred Text is an intrinsic quality; it is because it is. However, we can perceive the inherent quality, comparing inspired material with material that is not inspired. Consider the nature of the Bible's content, or message: it is not the sort of thing that the human being would wish to write, even if he could; nor is it the sort of thing that he could write, even if he wished to. And then there is the unity of the Bible: even though the 66 books were written by at least thirty different human authors, during some 2,000 years, and in two very different languages (Hebrew and Greek),¹ the whole is coherent, it does not contradict itself. There are also specific and detailed prophecies, even including a person's name, given centuries before the fact, that were precisely fulfilled.

For those who believe Jesus Christ to be God, His attitude toward the Old Testament will be relevant. He ascribed absolute authority to the OT; in John 5:45-47 He placed the writings of Moses on a par with His own word, that He declared to have eternal validity (Luke 21:33). As reported in the four Gospels, He cited at least Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, Zechariah and Malachi. In Luke 24:44 He explicitly recognized the three divisions of the Hebrew Canon: Law, Prophets and Writings (Psalms). And then there is Matthew 23:35—"so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel up to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar". Jesus is here concluding His denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees. The murder of Abel is the first one recorded in the Bible (Genesis 4:8). Please note that Jesus affirms the historicity of Abel, and since Abel had parents, of necessity, Jesus is also affirming the historicity of Abel's parents, Adam and Eve! Zechariah was a contemporary of Ezra and Haggai at the time of the construction of the second temple. So "all the righteous blood shed" between those two men covers the whole OT, some 3,500 years!

Having said all of the above, however, I recognize that to affirm the divine inspiration of the Bible is a declaration of faith—an intelligent faith that is based on evidences, but still faith, since the evidences are not absolute;² and

¹ A very few chapters were written in Aramaic.

² So we are not dealing with science, in an objective sense.

they are not absolute for a very good reason. The Sovereign Creator deliberately does not allow the evidences to be absolute, because then there would be no true test. The Creator requires that men choose between good and evil, and the choice may not be coerced. That last night, in the upper room, Sovereign Jesus referred to the Holy Spirit as “the Spirit of the Truth” and declared that “He will guide you into all the truth” (John 16:13). It is the Holy Spirit’s prerogative to convict and convince.