



The Holy Bible as the Word of God

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate both internally and externally, that the Holy Bible is indeed the Word of God so that believers become firmer in believing it and love it more as their holy text. Christians consider the Bible to be sacred because it contains messages from God. This is very important because there are many erroneous and misleading teachings about the Bible, which teach that the Bible contains the Word of God, the Bible being the Word of God and the Bible not being the Word of God. Irrespective, believers need to follow the rules it contains for living life and can turn to the teachings of Jesus Christ for moral and the deepest spiritual guidance. The research method used by the author was a qualitative one with a systematic theology study approach, because the domain of this research is in the field of theology, specifically Systematic Theology. In proving internally that the Bible is the Word of God, the primary and only source is the Bible itself with its self-authenticating Scriptures. The Bible is in essence true because it says it is true, and it is the Holy Spirit that bears witness to its profound truths. In proving externally that the Bible is the Word of God, the sources are books. Internal proof that the Bible is the Word of God is the teaching of Jesus, the teaching of Paul, Peter and others, the teaching of important terms, and the teaching of the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. External evidence that the Bible is the Word of God is evident through the uniqueness of the Bible and evidence through archaeological evidence (inter alia, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Nuzi Inscriptions, Ebla Inscriptions, Discovery in Mari).

Keywords: Bible, God's Word, inspiration, revelation, authentic.



Introduction

The Holy Bible is the Word of God which is the standard for a believer's life. So the Bible plays an important role in the life of God's people. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Bible often experiences attacks from those who are very anti-Bible.¹ There are several views related to the Bible, namely views that say that the Bible contains the Word of God and not the complete Word of God. This means that some are the Word of God and some are not the Word of God. If the passage does not make sense, then it is not the Word of God, but if it does make sense then it is the Word of God. This view is more held by liberals who prioritize the brain so that the benchmark of everything is the brain.

Another view is that the Bible is not the Word of God but it is also is the Word of God. That is, if the Bible is preached and becomes a blessing, then it is the Word of God, but if it is not, then it is not the Word of God. So that the benchmark of whether it is the Word of God or not, is whether it is a blessing or not. A more extreme view is that the Bible is not God's Word at all. Thus, some believe that the Bible is just an ordinary book that is full of errors so it cannot be trusted for its truth and has no veracity. This view is a liberal one that rejects the authority of the Holy Bible as the Word of God. Skeptics or agnostics reject it and even ridicule the Bible, they think the Bible is not the Word of God. Skeptics use any tactic to undermine the validity of the Bible and yet their efforts fail.

The problems that will be studied in this research are views that say that the Bible contains the Word of God, the Bible is the Word of God and the Bible is not the Word of God. Through this research, the writer wants to prove internally and externally that the Bible is the Word of God. This research is very important because it relates to the foundation of the Christian faith. The Bible plays a very important role in the life of every believer and determines how one lives his or her life. Since the canonization of the Bible as a handbook for the Christian life, Christians believe that the Holy Bible is a special statement that makes everyone who reads it able to know the history of God's people as it is written in the Bible. The 'book of life' that Christians of all ages have held in high esteem is the Bible.

Does the Bible contain the Word of God? Is the Bible the Word of God and is the Bible not the Word of God? These are the pressing issues of this brief research study. This research aims to provide a comprehensive explanation regarding internal and external evidence that the Bible is indeed the Word of God, not containing the Word of God, not being the Word of God, and moreover not the Word of God. Thus, through this research, believers will hopefully become firmer in their belief in the Holy Bible, which we contend is indeed the Word of God.

Methodology used

The method used in this research was a qualitative one with a Systematic Theology study approach. The study of Systematic Theology means seeking truth from the Scriptures and other sources outside the Scriptures, then compiling information about a doctrine by correlating all the books in the Scriptures.² In proving internally that the Bible is the Word of God, the only source is the Holy Scriptures, namely the Holy Bible. There are several stages of analysis carried out by the writer, namely: First, the writer searched for and collected certain verses related to the subject matter of this research. Secondly, the author conducted a study in the science of exegesis to find the true meaning of the verses or texts being studied with more emphasis on the original text, namely the Greek. Third, based on existing studies, the author then described it in his language by correlating it with other verses so that they are not contradictory.

¹ Ricky Donald Montang, "Pemahaman Tentang Inneransi Alkitab Di Klasis Gki Sorong," *Eirene Jurnal Ilmiah Teologi* 1, no. 2 (2016): 182–214.

² Paul Enns Paul, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989). 23



In proving externally that the Bible is the Word of God, the author conducted a literature review by investigating existing books and some relevant journal articles. There were several stages of analysis carried out by the writer, namely: First, the writer searched for and read books or sections thereof that were related the subject of research. Secondly, the author analyzed the existing works while still considering their truth, both from a historical perspective and based on their conformity with the truth of God's Word. Third, the author described the aforesaid using practical language that makes it easy to understand the essence of the messages.

Results and Discussion

Internal Evidence

There are several internal pieces of evidence which will be explained below which prove that the Bible is the Word of God, namely: the teaching of Jesus, the teaching of Paul, the teaching of Peter, the teaching of important terms, and the teaching of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. The explanation is as follows:

Jesus' teaching

According to Paul Enns, "In determining the nature of biblical inspiration, nothing is more significant than determining the view Christ held regarding the scriptures." The attitude of the Lord Jesus towards the Holy Bible greatly determines the position of the Bible itself in the Christian faith. The Bible is Christocentric, meaning that Christ is the center of attention in the Bible.³ If Jesus acknowledged the inspiration of the Bible, it means that Jesus also acknowledged that the Bible is truly the Word of God.

Overall Inspiration

Christ's use of the Old Testament lends support to the overall inspiration of the Old Testament. In Matthew 5:17-18, Christ confirmed that not the least letter or one iota will pass from the law until all is fulfilled. In verse 17, Jesus refers to the Torah or the Prophets, a phrase commonly used to refer to the entire Old Testament. With this statement, Jesus confirmed the inviolability of the entire Old Testament. The word "abolish" (v. 17) is from the Greek word *kataluo* which means to remove, abolish or cancel. The use of the infinitive form of the words "to abolish" and "to fulfill" in the original word serves to express the purpose of the main/main verb "has come" (*elthon*). Therefore, the two words in the infinitive form *catalusai* and *plerosai* must be translated by adding the word "for". The word "abolish" is contrasted with the word "fulfill". So, the Lord Jesus has come into the world not to abolish, abolish, or cancel the old agreement, but to fulfill it. The word "fulfill" in another sense means "to make a right."⁴ The idea contained in this understanding is that the coming of the Lord Jesus to this world proves how true the Old Testament as a whole is, because through His experience, one by one, what is written about Him is fulfilled. As it was conceptualized in the previous section Jesus Christ who is God acknowledged the overall inspiration for the OT and NT, because Christ acknowledged it, this is the main basis for us recognizing the inerrancy of the Bible, which in this case is only the original text.⁵

Inspiration Sections

Christ quotes a lot from the Old Testament. His arguments depended on the integrity of the Old Testament passages He quoted. In this way, Christ confirmed the inspiration of individual Old Testament texts or books. When tempted by Satan, He refuted Satan's arguments by quoting from Deuteronomy. In Matthew 4:4,7,10, Jesus quotes from Deuteronomy 8:3; 6:13,16, which indicates that Satan was wrong and emphasizes that the words written in Deuteronomy have been fulfilled. This is one proof of the inspiration of the passages.

³ Arnold Tindas, *Apakah Innerancy Alkitab Itu?* 96.

⁴ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982). 289

⁵ Arnold Tindas, *Apakah Innerancy Alkitab Itu?* 34.



Inspirational Words

In Matthew 22:44, where Jesus is in debate with the Pharisees, He explains that their concept of the Messiah is wrong. The Pharisees thought of the Messiah as a political redeemer but Jesus showed them in a quote from Psalm 110:1, that David, the greatest king of Israel, saw the Messiah as greater than himself, calling Him Lord. The whole argument of Christ lies in the phrase "My Lord". In quoting Psalm 110:1, Jesus laid His argument on the inspiration of the words "My Lord". If Psalm 110:1 does not read "my Lord" correctly, then Christ's argument is in vain. This shows that Christ acknowledged inspiration verbally or in words. So this cannot be denied the truth. This process is supernatural. The Bible is the verbal and inerrant word of God.

Lettering Inspiration

In a number of His statements, Christ stated that He acknowledged that the words of the Holy Bible were inspired. Matthew 5:18, Jesus declared, "Not one iota or one tittle shall be taken away from the law until all is fulfilled." This proves that Christ acknowledged the inspiration of the words in the Bible.

New Testament inspiration

During the conversation in the upper room, Christ made a very significant statement, pointing to the last accurate record of the New Testament. In John 14:26, Jesus indicated that the Holy Spirit would give the apostles accurate memories when they wrote down the words of the scriptures, thereby guaranteeing their accuracy (John 16:12-15). It explains how an old man like John, when writing the life of Jesus Christ, could accurately describe in detail the events that happened years earlier. It was the Holy Spirit or *Paraclete* who gave John and the other writers accurate memories of the events. So, Jesus confirmed not only the inspiration of the Old Testament but also the New Testament (*Kaine Diatheke*). The obvious conclusion is that Jesus Christ held a very high view of the Holy Bible. He confirms the inspiration of the entire Old Testament and the New Testament. Thus, if Jesus Christ acknowledged the inspiration of the Bible as a whole, it means that Jesus Christ also acknowledged that the Bible is truly the Word of God.

Paul's teaching

Paul's teaching in 2 Timothy 3:14-17 is very important in seeing Paul's view of the Bible. This will be divided into three parts, namely: the nature of the Bible, the meaning of the Old Testament Bible, and the status of the Old Testament and the New Testament.

The nature of the Holy Bible.

In 2 Timothy 3:14, it says "But you must stick to the truth that you have received and you believe in, always remembering the person who has taught it to you." The expression "let ... hold on" is translated from the Greek word *meno* which means "to carry on". The meaning of the present imperative form used in the verb *meno*, is to show the idea of an order to proceed more carefully, something that is being done up to now. This idea is further clarified by the use of two past tense verbs, namely "you have received and you believe". So that truth has been held by Timothy and Paul calls on Timothy to continue to hold on to it. The truth referred to here are matters that originate from the Bible, and therefore it is the same as pointing to the Bible. So for Paul the nature of the Bible is true and does not change because its teachings lead a person to live righteously and the truth does not change. Therefore Paul demanded that Timothy hold fast to the truth (the Bible) that he had been taught. So, for Paul, the Bible is true, because the Bible is the Word of God so it can't be wrong. The compatibility between the parts of the Bible is guaranteed, it has even been proven in his own life experience, as Timothy also followed. This proves that the Bible is the Word of God.

The Meaning of the Old Testament Bible

Specifically, in 2 Timothy 3:15 it says: "Remember also that from childhood you have known the scriptures that can give you wisdom and lead you to salvation through faith in Christ



Jesus." The holy book referred to in this verse is the Old Testament. The Greek word used for "scripture" is *hiera grammata*, which means sacred letters. The meaning of the Old Testament aspect mentioned in this verse, is "which can give you wisdom and lead you to salvation." This phrase can be translated "which can make you wise for salvation." So the meaning emphasized here is to give wisdom or make wise. The Greek word used is *sophizo*, which means to make wise, teach, or train.⁶ The idea that emerges here is that the Old Testament Bible when speaking of about human salvation only gives us the notion of wisdom, and it teaches, and trains us for salvation. Indirectly, it is revealed here that the Old Testament Bible accurately records without any error about our salvation in Jesus Christ, from His birth to His death to atone for all human sins by His sacrifice on Golgotha. All of this was prophesied in the Old Testament and was fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ. This means that the Old Testament Bible is infallible and does not conflict with the New Testament, because the Bible is God's Word.

The Status and Meaning of the Old and New Testaments

In 2 Timothy 3:16-17, Paul states the following: "All the writings inspired by God are useful for teaching, for reassuring mistakes, for correcting behavior and for educating people in the truth. Thus every man who belongs to God is equipped for every good work. The status put forward here regarding the Bible is that it is inspired by God. Every part or every book in the Old Testament and the New Testament is inspired by God. The phrase "all writings" from the Greek *pasa graphe* is more accurately translated as "every writing" so that it more clearly refers to each part or book of the Bible. According to F.C. Cook, "the term *graphe* is used 50 times in the New Testament, and all of these usages refer to the writings of the Old and New Testaments."

The word "inspired by God" comes from the word *theopneustos* which literally means "breathed by God". Paul uses the term 'God-breathed' to suggest that every part of the Bible is God's production. The inspiration referred to here is verbal inspiration because every part of Bible as a whole is God-breathed. Thus, the status of the Bible inspired by God, further confirms that the Bible is the Word of God. So for Paul the Bible could not be wrong because it was 'breathed' by God or is indeed a product of God.

This section, not only explains the status of the Bible but also explains the meaning of the Old and New Testaments. There are four meanings of the Holy Bible explained in this verse, namely: the Bible is useful for teaching, useful for stating mistakes, useful for correcting behaviour, and useful for educating people in the truth. These four things are concluded in verse 17, namely that the Bible can equip every human being of God for every good deed. The word "teaching" from the Greek word *didaskalia* is a noun, so it is more accurately translated as "teaching". This points to the Bible as the true teaching material or source. The term "reproach" comes from the word *elegmos* which is a noun meaning "to refute", both about false and evil teaching. The meaning of "to correct behavior" is that after improper behavior becomes evident by teaching in the Bible, the next step is an application, namely correcting behavior according to that teaching. The expression "educate people in the truth" states that it is not enough for a person to just correct wrong behavior, he must be trained so that he can live according to the Bible truth. When you have reached this stage, it means that someone who is called belonging to God has received equipment for doing every good deed. So, for Paul, the Bible is God's Word because it was inspired by God, how can it be a standard of truth if it is full of errors or mistakes? Therefore, the Bible is truly the Word of God and this is very clear in Paul's view. Paul says his word is the word of God. He informs the Thessalonians: "When you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

⁶ Walter Bauer, *A Greek English Lexicon of The New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979). 760



Peter's teaching

2 Peter 1:19-21, is Peter's teaching which provides a strong foundation for the teaching that the Bible is truly the Word of God. Peter's teaching will be divided into two parts, namely the meaning of the Bible and the origin of the Bible.

Bible meaning

In 2 Peter 1:19, it says: "In this way, we are further strengthened by the word that has been delivered by the prophets. It would be good for you to pay attention to it as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises, shining in your hearts." The meaning of the Bible put forward here is to edify all believers, both the apostles in particular and Christians in general. The prophecies about Christ in the Old Testament were fulfilled precisely so that Christians are increasingly convinced of their full fulfillment in the future. Thus, the innocence of the Bible is guaranteed which proves that the Bible is the Word of God. The Apostle Peter taught that the Old Testament Bible is infallible. Christ's experience in the world has proven the innocence of the Bible. Peter himself was an eyewitness about that experience of Christ. Even God justifies Christ as the center of the Old Testament Bible. The prophetic word is infallible, because if it is wrong, how can it be the basis of firm faith and a guide in the Christian life.

The Origins of the Bible

Peter stated how important it is in the life of Christians to know the scriptures, especially about the origin of events. Peter was also so sure that the Bible came from God himself through people who had been appointed to write or speak on His behalf. This was stated in 2 Peter 1: 20-21, which said: "What you should know first of all, is that the prophecies in the Scriptures should not be interpreted according to one's own will, because prophecies have never been produced by human will, but by the promptings of the Spirit." Holy people speak in the name of God. Interpreters generally agree that the scriptures referred to here are the Old Testament Bible. The phrase "prophecies in the scriptures" in the original language *pasa profeteia grafes* literally means "every prophecy from the writings". The use of the word *ginomai* which means to be refers more to the question of the occurrence of the Bible. Peter wanted to argue that the prophecies in the scriptures did not come about because of the cleverness of the prophets themselves in giving explanations. The phrase "never" emphasizes that none of the prophecies originate directly from humans, because they are driven by their own will. This is reinforced by the word "but" which seems to call for serious attention to understand that the prophets only spoke on behalf of God.

How did the Bible come about? The answer is it happened "by the prompting of the Holy Spirit". The word "push" comes from the word *fero*, which means to bring, invite, influence, and move. In this verse, it is used in the passive voice, so it is more accurately translated as "moved" or "controlled" rather than pushed. The word "pushed" underscores the influence of the Holy Spirit on biblical writers. The word "moved" or "controlled", shows the role of the Holy Spirit in preventing the writers from error. Thus, if the prophets speak on behalf of God, it means that God is the source of every prophecy in the Bible. If God is the source of the Bible, then it must be free from all errors and is in fact infallible, because the Bible writers were controlled by the Holy Spirit. Thus, it is clear that Peter's view of the Bible is the Word of God.

The Teaching of Important Terms

Two important terms will be explained in this section, namely: revelation and inspiration, which provide evidence that the Bible is the Word of God. The explanation is as follows:

Revelation

The term revelation is taken from the Greek *apokalupsis*, which means "unveiling" or "opened".⁷ Statements are generally divided into two parts, namely general statements and special statements. Lewis (1980), listed seven characteristics of God's revelation, namely:

⁷ Ens, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. 188



revelation through the universe, through human providence, through the providential universe, through miracles, through direct communication, through Christ's incarnation, and the Bible.⁸ Thus, if the Bible is one of God's self-revelation to humans then, of course, the Bible is God's Word, because if the Bible is not God's Word, then of course it is not God's revelation. The Bible as one of God's revelations proves that the Bible is truly the Word of God that should be believed and accepted by believers.

Inspiration

The term inspiration comes from the Greek word *Theopneustos* an *hapax legomenon* (meaning it occurs only once in the Greek NT) meaning "breathed by God." God breathes the Bible, just as we breathe out of our mouths when we speak, so it can be said that God speaks through the Bible.⁹ According to Paul Enns, inspiration is the leading of the Holy Spirit to the writers, so that even though the writing is done according to their style and personality, the result is the written Word of God, which is authoritative, trustworthy, and free from error in the original autograph.¹⁰ As one reads the Bible, they find the Holy Spirit confirming that what they are reading is in fact God's Word. Therefore, we have the claim of Scripture, but additionally the witness of the Holy Spirit that whatever is written in Scripture is true. There are several definitions of inspiration by theologians, namely: Charles Ryrie says that "Inspiration was God overseeing in such a way that the Bible writers collated and recorded without error His message to mankind in the form of the words in the original writing."¹¹ According to Millard Erickson, "Inspiration is the supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit on the writers of the books of the Bible to make their work an accurate record of revelation or to cause their work to truly be the Word of God."¹² According to Henry Thiessen, "Inspiration was the Holy Spirit guiding and controlling the Bible writers in such a way, using their uniqueness personally and individually, so that they wrote everything He wanted them to write, without additions or errors."¹³

There are several important elements in the proper definition of inspiration, according to Paul Enns, and these are namely:

1. The Divine Element. God the Holy Spirit led the writers to ensure the accuracy of the writings;
2. The human element. Human writers wrote according to their way and personality;
3. The result of this divine and human writing is the record of God's infallible truth;
4. Inspiration includes the selection of words by the writers;
5. Inspiration relates to the original manuscript.¹⁴ The teaching of inspiration is very decisive in building teachings about the Bible as the Word of God. Because of this, various theories about inspiration emerged as an attempt to determine the position of the Bible in the Christian faith.

Chafer lists as many as seven theories of inspiration, that is¹⁵ 1. The mechanical or dictation theory. It was God who dictated the writings of the Bible to humans. Writing style and vocabulary come from the divine author (the divine author). 2. Partial Inspiration. Inspiration includes only doctrinal teachings and instructions and truths that were incomprehensible to human authors (the human authors). 3. Degrees of inspiration. Certain passages in the Bible have a higher level of inspiration than others. 4. The concept and not the words inspired. God only gives concepts or ideas, while the human writer expresses them in his language. 5. Natural inspiration. Certain people who have

⁸ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1980). 53

⁹ R.C. Sproul, *Kebenaran-Kebenaran Dasar Iman Kristen* (Malang: Literatur SAAT, 2000). 17

¹⁰ Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. 193

¹¹ Charles C. Ryrie, *Teologi Dasar, Jilid 1* (Yogyakarta: Yayasan ANDI, 1991). 94

¹² Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985). 199

¹³ Henry C. Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systemic Theology* (Michigan: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956). 105.

¹⁴ Paul, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. 194

¹⁵ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*. 204



extraordinary spiritual knowledge, have the ability as a natural innate, then write the Bible. 6. Mystical Inspiration. Every Christian can write the Bible through special divine power. God is working in them. 7. Verbal, plenary inspiration. Word-for-word inspiration means that in the original writings of the Bible, the Holy Spirit guided the choice of words to use. The characters of the writers and their vocabulary are used but without any admixture of errors.

My inspiration throughout means that the accuracy as guaranteed in verbal inspiration is extended to every portion of the Bible so that each part of the Bible is inerrant as to the truth and decisive as to its divine authority. The Bible's teaching about inspiration is very decisive in building teachings about it as the Word of God. It is truly God's Word because it was inspired and revealed by God. Because it is inspired and revealed by God, it can not be wrong. Inspiration guarantees that the Bible that we have today is a holy book that is free from all errors both from historical and scientific points of view because the Bible is the Word of God. This is proof that the Bible is truly the Word of God.

Teachings from the Fulfillment of Bible Prophecy

The Bible is full of records about prophecy and its fulfillment. In the Old Testament, there are many prophecies recorded and the New Testament records their fulfillment, so it can be said that the Old Testament prophesied events that would occur, and all of them were fulfilled in the New Testament. There are several examples of fulfilled prophecies, and few of them are discussed below, namely:

Prophecies regarding the first coming of Jesus

Born of a virgin - Matthew 1:18-25, Abraham's seed - Genesis 12:3; Matthew 1:1-2, from the tribe of Judah – Genesis 12:3; Matthew 1:2, descendants of David 1 Samuel 7:12, Matthew 1: 1,6, born in Bethlehem Mark 5:1, Matthew 2:1, rides a horse into Jerusalem, Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-7, sold by his close friend, Psalms 41:20; sold for 30 pieces of silver, Zechariah 11:12-13; 1 Peter 2:24, rises from the dead, Psalms 16: 10-11, Acts 2:24,27-28, Ascended To Heaven, Psalms 68:18-19, Acts 1:6-11. James Kennedy has argued that, "The only place where God places evidence of His inspired Word, as well as signs of the greatness of His Son, Jesus, is in the prophecies about Jesus, all of which have been and will be fulfilled."¹⁶

Prophecy concerning Israel

They will be scattered among all nations (Leviticus 31:31-34). But God promised that they would exist forever (Jeremiah 31:35-36). The prophecy about the scattering of Israel to various corners of the earth has been completely fulfilled in Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Jeremiah 15:4; Hosea 3:4. These are just some of the examples of fulfilled prophecies and there are many more examples of fulfilled prophecies. This proves that the Bible is truly the Word of God. Henry C. Thiessen comments: "Only God can reveal the future, whereas prophecy about the future is a miracle of knowledge. The fulfilled prophecy shows that the writers of the Bible prophecies had a kind of supernatural knowledge."¹⁷ Who can see far into the future the events that will take place hundreds or even thousands of years, if not God. He inspired the writers so that they could foretell future events and they were fulfilled exactly as they were prophesied. Fulfillment of Bible prophecy proves that the Holy Bible is the Word of God.

External Evidence

The Holy Bible is the Word of God, not only proven internally from the Bible itself but also by means of external evidence from outside the Bible that proves that the Bible is truly the Word of God. External evidence that the Bible is the Word of God, can be seen in the explanation that follows below.

¹⁶ D. James Kennedy, *Mengungkap Misteri-Misteri Dalam Alkitab* (Batam: Gospel Press, 2003). 24

¹⁷ Henry C. Thiessen, *Introductory Lectures in Systematic Theology*. 72



Evidence Through the Uniqueness of the Bible¹⁸

The uniqueness of the Bible which is explained at length by Josh McDowell in his book *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* (Volume 1), is one of the external evidences that prove that the Bible is the Word of God. The explanation is as follows:

Unique in Its Continuity

The Bible is unique in its continuity. Its uniqueness is as follows: 1. Written over a period of more than 1500 years. 2. Written for more than 40 generations. 3. Written by more than 40 authors from different backgrounds. For example, Moses was a political leader, Joshua a warlord, Daniel a prime minister, Solomon a king, Nehemiah a king's cupbearer, Amos a shepherd, Matthew a tax official, Luke a doctor, Peter a fisherman and Paul a rabbi. 4. It was also written in many different places for example, by Moses in the desert, Jeremiah in the prison house, Daniel on the hillsides and in the palace, Luke on 'the way', John on the island of Patmos, Paul behind the prison walls, and others in the middle of the war. 5. Written at different times. David wrote in times of war while Solomon wrote in times of peace. 6. Written in a different mood. Some are written in the peak of joy and some are written amid the deepest suffering and in despair. 7. Written on three different continents. Asia, Europe, and Africa. 8. Written in three different languages. Hebrew is the language of the Old Testament, Aramaic is the common language of the Near East until the time of Alexander the Great 6th – 4th century BCE, and Greek is the language of the New Testament. Even though the Bible was written by different people with different backgrounds, in different places, at different times, in different situations, and over a long period, it has the same central theme, namely salvation in Jesus Christ (John 3:16) and there is no contradiction between one and another. Why does this happen? There must be a divine hand behind all of this. This is where the uniqueness of the Bible is second to none, which at the same time proves that the Bible is the Word of God.

Unique in its Circulation

The Bible was one of the first major books to be translated (Septuagint: Greek translation of the OT into Hebrew c. 250 BCE). The Bible has been translated and re-translated and interpreted more times than any other book. The Encyclopaedia Britannica says that "until 1969 the Bible as a whole was presented in 240 languages and dialects. One or more books of the Bible in 739 other languages, which in total have been published in 1280 languages.

Unique In Its Defensive Ability

Although written on perishable materials, it had to be copied and re-copied for hundreds of years before printing techniques were invented, retaining its style, accuracy, and presence. The Bible, compared to any other ancient literary work, is supported by more textual evidence than 10 literary works combined. The Bible has withstood the vicious persecution of its enemies more than any other book. Many have tried to burn it, banish it, and eradicate it from the time of the Roman Empire until today in many countries controlled by the communists. For eighteen centuries unbelievers have tried to reject and overthrow this book, and yet it has survived to this day as firm as a rock. Its circulation is increasing and it is more loved and respected today than ever before. The uniqueness of the Bible described above is one of the external evidences that proves that the Bible is the Word of God. So that the Bible is the Word of God, and not a belief that has no basis at all, but it is based on existing facts. In *many Bible* passages, *both* explicitly or implicitly it *states that it is* Word of God. There are over 300 times where we encounter the following: "God said," or "Thus says the Lord".

¹⁸ Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict Volume 1* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1995). 15-24



Evidence Through Archaeology ¹⁹

There is much archaeological evidence on the Holy Bible stories and only a small sample will be explained below to demonstrate that what is recorded in the Holy Bible is in fact true and does not conflict with existing historical facts.

Dead Sea Scrolls

The Dead Sea Manuscripts found by a shepherd in February 1947 on the west bank of the Dead Sea and were only published in November 1947 were major and very important discoveries. These manuscripts consist of 40,000 written fragments. The thing that was a problem before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls was how precise the copies we have now are compared to first-century texts, since they have been copied hundreds of times, can we trust them? Thanks to archaeology and the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls we now know. One of the scrolls found was the complete manuscript of the Hebrew text of Isaiah. According to palaeographers it dates from around 125 BCE. This manuscript is more than 1000 years older than any previous Bible texts we have. The impact of this discovery is the accuracy of the scroll of Isaiah (125 BCE) with the Masoretic text of Isaiah (916 CE) from 1000 years later. This demonstrates the incredible accuracy of 1,000 years of Scripture copying. Gleason Archer states that the Qumran community copies of the Book of Isaiah "shown word-for-word accuracy with our standard Hebrew Bible to over 95 percent of the entire text. Five percent of the deviations consist mostly of typos and variations in spelling".²⁰ Also, the famous Merneptah Stele, dated to roughly 1206 BCE and now viewable at the Cairo Museum, gives us the earliest historical evidence of the people called Israelites.

Ketef Hinnom scrolls

The oldest surviving texts currently known from the original Hebrew Bible relate to the priestly blessing dated to 600 BCE. The text discovered in 1979, emanates from the Book of Numbers in the Old Testament and has been referred to as a hugely significant discovery for biblical studies.

Based on a palaeographic analysis of the style of handwriting in the letters, scholars have suggested that these amulets date back to around the second half of the seventh century BC. This would place them around the time of biblical figures like king Josiah and the prophet Jeremiah. Amazingly, the very brief and fragmentary contents of the silver amulets contained excerpts from Aaron's blessing in Numbers 6:24-26, as well as phrases from Deuteronomy 7:9 (also paralleled in Nehemiah 1:5 and Daniel 9:4). As such, these tiny texts are by far the earliest quotations of the Bible we possess, and the only ones that date prior to the Babylonian exile. (Ozolins, 2021 [Available online at <https://tyndalehouse.com/explore/articles/the-ketef-hinnom-amulets/>].

Inscriptions From Nuzi

Nuzi is a small place in north-eastern Iraq which is located southeast of Nineveh. The Nuzi (Nuzu) people were Horites who were originally thought to be "cave dwellers," but are now known to belong to the Armenian family, inhabitants of Northern Mesopotamia who are not of Indo-European descent. They flourished between 1500 and 1400 BCE.²¹ Wright explains that "The Nuzi letters shed light on many typical customs from the time of the patriarchs in the second millennium, but not on the life of the Israelites in the first millennium".²² Albright summarizes the significance of the inscriptions from Nuzi: "When we add to the fact that our knowledge of the institutions and customs of peoples in other parts of Northern Mesopotamia in the fifteenth-century BCE (Nuzi) has extensively illuminated many details

¹⁹ Josh McDowell, *Apologetika Volume 1* (Malang: Gandum Mas, 2002). 115-127

²⁰ Gleason Archer, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964). 10

²¹ G. Ernest Wright, *The Study of the Bible Today and Tomorrow* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947). 43

²² Wright, 87



of ancient ancestor stories completely inconsistent with the teachings or traditions after Moses, then our problem regarding the main historicity of the stories of the Patriarchs becomes complete".²³ Thus, archaeological discoveries specifically at Nuzi provide historical great evidence regarding the stories written in the Bible. This also proves that what the Bible says is true and that the Bible is the Word of God.

Ebla inscription

The extraordinary archaeological discovery of Tell Mardikh from the ancient city of Ebla is now opening up a new treasury of ancient stories. The Ebla tablets are a collection of about 1,800 clay tablets, 4,700 fragments, and many thousands of smaller chips which were discovered in the palace archives, and this archaeological discovery was made in northern Syria by two professors from the University of Rome, namely Dr. Paolo Matthiae, an archaeologist, and Dr. Giovanni Petinato, an expert on ancient writing. An example of what Ebla's discoveries contributed to is that of Genesis 14, which for many years has been considered to be historically unaccountable. Abraham's victories over Chedorlaomer and the Mesopotamian kings have been dismissed as being fictitious and the five plain cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Zoar are only legends. But in the Ebla archives the five plain cities are mentioned and on one tablet they are listed in the same order as they are in Genesis 14. This is an indisputable historical fact about the Bible record. This proves that the Bible record is true.

Discoveries on Mari

Excavations at Mari began in 1933, under the direction of Andre Parrot. Mari is located on the Middle Euphrates River, and was one of the important centers for the life of the Northwest Semitic peoples. In 1963 Parrot excavated and unearthed thousands of cuneiform tablets, most of which date to around 1700 BCE. These tablets shed light on the background of the traditions of the Patriarchs in the Book of Genesis. One of the contributions made through the discovery at Mari is the city "Nahor" which plays an important role in the stories of the Patriarchs after Haran (Genesis 24:10) and is often mentioned with Haran in Mari documents dating to c. 1700 BCE. The name of a king from Mari, Arriyuk, matches with Arioch who is mentioned in Genesis 14. These facts prove that the historical records described in the Bible are in essence true. This shows us that the Bible is true and cannot be wrong, because the Bible is in fact God's Word. Tkach explains :

Though the Bible contains history, it is not primarily a book of history. Its main purpose is to share the story of God's love and faithfulness, pointing us to Jesus. That information is primarily theological and thus cannot be "proved" from the artifacts of history. Such truths must be revealed to us by God himself, and he has used Holy Scripture as his tool. Archaeology does add to our understanding of the Bible. With the unearthing of ancient artifacts in the Near East, many archaeologists have seen the need to take a fresh look at the biblical account. The reality is that no archaeological discovery has ever contradicted those aspects of the biblical record that can be corroborated by archeological means. (Tkach, n.d. [Available online at <https://www.gci.org/articles/how-archaeology-confirms-the-bible/>].

Conclusion

The Holy Bible is the inspired word of God, and this then means that it is a reliable source of both truth and wisdom from God Himself. Thus its wisdom comes from God and not from human beings. The Bible plays a very important role in the life of a believer because it is the foundation of faith and it is the greatest authority in Christian life. Therefore, the truth that the Bible is God's Word to humanity, is final and cannot be contested. The Bible provides very convincing internal evidence that it is the Word of God. Both the teaching of

²³ Albright W. F, *The Biblical Period From Abraham to Ezra* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963). 4-5



Jesus himself, the teachings of Paul and Peter and others, the teaching of important terms, and the teaching of the fulfillment of Bible prophecy, all provide evidence that the Bible is truly the Word of God. The Bible is the Word of God not only proven internally but also externally. Evidence obtained externally is through the uniqueness of the Holy Bible as well as archaeological discoveries. With the existing evidence that the Bible is the Word of God, it will further strengthen the faith of believers so that they are not swayed by teachings that are not aligned to the Bible and ultimately accept the view that the Holy Bible contains the Word of God, and is thus the Word of God. The Christian churches are all in agreement that the Holy Bible is the Word of God, and it is one that speaks principally about our Saviour, His Son, Jesus Christ and His Holy Spirit. The Holy Bible tells us to “incline your ear and come to me. Hear that your soul may live; I will make with you an everlasting covenant (Isaiah, 55:3).

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