

DID GOD INSPIRE THE BIBLE? : AN INTERPRETATION

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Abstract

What Paul meant when he says that the Scripture is “inspired by God”? (2 Tim. 3:16). Paul wrote in a Greek language, using a word that literally means “breathed by God.” Therefore, Paul is saying that God through the Holy Spirit guided the writers of the Bible to write the things that God wanted to say. These Bible writers wrote the things “according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit” (1 Pet. 1:2). Thus, Apostle Paul also mentions that the books of the Bible are “sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” 2 Tim. 3:15.

Introduction

Whether Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Communists or any sect's believers once have asked, does the Christian Bible really the Word of God? Did the Bible inspire by God? Or other question such as, can we believe in the Bible? Can the bible the standard of life? If the Bible is the word of God, is it mandatory to learn, obey, and believe it? The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes that the Holy Scripture, Old Testament and New Testament, is the written Word of God, inspired by God given to the holy men that were moved to speak and write by the Holy Spirit. Apostle Peter said “for no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit. The Bible is given by God. The Bible has been given to human beings through different periods and recovered in a trusted ways. Thus, the Bible has been translated correctly, therefore, the Bible is the message from God which become the standard of morality. Moreover, the Gospel is the basic doctrine of Christianity that is given by Christ for His people. Consider the inspiration and authority of the Bible below:

Definition of Inspiration

The Bible is given through the inspiration of God, through the work of the Holy Spirit to the elects, revealing to them the thoughts of God and enabling them to express the correct words to communicate God's truth without error even though they are sinners. Apostle

Paul stated that “all Scriptures are inspired by God” (2 Tim. 3:16). The Greek word *Theopneustos*, which is translated as “inspired” actually means “breathed by God.” God “breathed” the truth to the mind of man. Then, it was now the turn of man to express the breath of God in words, that finally becomes the Holy Scripture. Therefore, inspiration is a process that is used by God to share His eternal truth.¹ Inspiration is taken from a Latin word which means “deep breath” or “into” (in and spiro) and from the Greek word which means “the breath of God” (theopneustos). God gave the Holy Spirit to guide the Bible writers, so that they can write the Bible, thus “inspiration” can be defined as a process in which God breathed His Holy Spirit to man to enable them to accept and communicate the divine truth without error. The Bible is the voice of God!

The Bible writers wrote about the facts they know and the facts they do not know without inspiration. Facts they got from the personal experience, available documents, or mouth to mouth tradition. Apostle Paul mentions in Luke 1:3, 4, “It seemed good to me also, having traced the course of all things accurately from the first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus; that thou mightiest know the certainty concerning the things wherein thou wast instructed.” Most of what they wrote they knew it for the first time through the inspiration from God, both facts and revelation, the inspiration of God

¹ Apa yang Perlu anda Ketahui tentang 28 Uraian Doktrin Dasa Alkitabiah, (Indonesia Publishing House, Bandung), 20

guided them to know only the truth without error in communication.²

There is no doubt for the Bible to claim itself as the only Word of God. This is clearly stated in its verses such as 2 Timothy 3:15-1: "And that from a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Every scripture is inspired of God also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

² Hugo McCord, *Inspiration and Authority Of The Bible, Truth For Today*, p. 3.

Interpretation: Internal and External Evidences that the Bible is the Word of God

To answer the questions of the research, the researcher will elaborate the internal and external evidences that the Bible is really the Word of God. The internal evidences are the evidences that can be found in the Bible, which prove that the

Bible is the Word of God. One of the internal evidences is the unity of the Bible. Even though the Bible has sixty six different books, written in in three continents, with three languages, for 1,500 years, by more than forty writers (with different backgrounds, the Bible is still unified, from the beginning until the end, without contradiction. This unity is different from the unity of any other book.

Another internal evidence which indicates that God is really the Word of God can be seen through the detailed prophecies that can be found in the pages of the Bible. The Bible has hundreds of prophecies that are stated in details, about nations, Israelites, future of difference cities, future of man, and the coming of Messiah. The Savior is not only for the Israelites, but for everyone who believes in Him. Different from other prophecies in other religions, Biblical prophecies are very detailed, and always fulfilled. In Old Testament alone, there are at least three hundred prophecies about Jesus Christ. The prophecies not only mentioned about where he would be borne and his family, but also it mentioned about how he would die and rose on the third day. There is no other religion's book that has prophecies

like of the Bible.

The third internal evidence about the divine origin of the Bible can be seen through its special authority. Even though this evidence is more subjective than the first two evidences, this evidence is still a powerful testimony to prove that the Bible is from God. Differ from other books that have been written throughout history, the Bible has a unique authority. Authority and power can be seen clearly through the many lives that have been changed by reading the Bible. Drug addicts were cured, homosexuals repented, people who had miserable lives changed, criminals restored, sinners repented, hate becomes love through reading the Bible. The Bible has a dynamic power that can change lives, because the Bible is really the Word of God.

Beside the internal evidences, there are also external evidences that prove the Bible is really the Word of God. One of them is the historicity of the bible. The Bible gives detailed accounts of history, and the accuracy of its history can be compared to the other historical documents. Through the archeological evidences and others writings, the Biblical accounts were proven accurate. Since all the archeological evidences of the Bible are accurate, then it made the Bible to become the most documented ancient writing. This fact indicates that the Bible is the Word of God.

The other external evidence that the Bible is the Word of God is the integrity of the writers. As has been mentioned before, God used people from different backgrounds to write down the things that God wanted to say. By analyzing their lives, and to know the fact that they were ready to die for what they believe, a conclusion can be drawn that God really had spoken to them. The New Testament people and hundreds of other believers (1 Cor. 15:6) know the truth of their messages, because they have seen them working together with Christ after Christ was resurrected from the dead. The changed that happened after seeing Jesus resurrected was really great. From hiding because of fear, they became the people who were to die for sharing the truth that had been given by God. Their lives and death are the testimony of the fact that Bible is really the Word of God.

The last external evidence that the Bible is really the Word of God is that the Bible cannot be destroyed. The Bible has been

target of attack for many times, more than any other book throughout the history. From the time of Diocletian, a Roman emperor, until the time of dictators, communists, atheists and modern agnostics, the Bible has been able to survive from all of the attacks, and until now is still the most printed book in the world.

Throughout the history, the skeptics have considered the Bible as myth, but archeology has proven the historicity of the Bible. Those who opposed the Bible have attacked the teachings of the Bible and called it as primitive and old fashioned, but the concept and moral teaching as well as the law of the Bible had shared positive influence to the different cultures and communities throughout the world. The Bible has been a constant target of science, psychology and political movements, however, the Bible is still the truth and relevant just like when it was written. The Bible is has changed many lives and cultures in 2,000 years. No matter how hard the attacked and try and to destroy the Bible, the Bible is still standing firmly. The accuracy of the Bible is not changed even though many are trying to destroy and put it down. Jesus said, "heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. After seeing the evidences, people can say confidently that yes, the Bible is really the Word of God.

Interpretation: The Bible Claims Itself as the Word of God

Notice the two elements of inspiration in 2 Samuel 23:2, God speaks to human beings; (a) "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me" (b) ""His Word was in my tongue. In Matthew 5:17, 18, Jesus acknowledged the inspiration of the Old Testament. A jot is the smallest letter and a title is the smallest punctuation mark in the Greek language. Thus, Jesus acknowledged that everything of the writings are inspired by God. Here Jesus gives a clear recognition for the inspiration of the Old Testament. 1 Thessalonians 2:13, "for this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh on in you that believe." 1 Corinthians 2:11-13, "For who knows a person's thoughts except their own

spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words." 2 Peter 1:20-2, "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." There are more than 3,800 promises in the Old Testament using the expression, "God speaks" or "Thus says the Lord."²

The Bible is the verbal and inerrant Word of God. God is not merely inspired the "thoughts" and allowing the human authors to choose any word. This is God's own words. Every single word in the Bible is there because God wanted it to be there. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that human authors were only "typewriters" of God. The Holy Spirit uses every individual style of the authors.

Inerrant means error free. There is no error in the Bible. This implies that the Bible has absolute authority. R. Sudarmo in his book "Ikhtisar Dogmatika"

³ Paul Sain, *Bukti-bukti Kekristenan*, (Yayasan Pendidikan Alkitab Agape), 14.

states that "this nature is found in 'Theopneustos.' Theopneustos means revealed by the the Holy Spirit, by God Himself, and God cannot be wrong. Thus the conclusion is the Holy Scripture is inerrant."³

³ Paul Sain, *Bukti-bukti Kekristenan*, (Yayasan Pendidikan Alkitab Agape), 14.

⁴ R. Soedarmo, *Ikhtisar Dogmatika*, (BPK Gunung Mulia: Jakarta, 1993). 144

The Bible can endure the persecution and criticism from the time of Roman emperors to the communist domination, the Bible is often

time suffered from the efforts to annihilate it. The Bible has been persecuted, prohibited and burned. The Bible can endure all those things and its distribution became wider. After facing all the harsh criticism period by the ancient philosophers such as Celcus and Porphyri, The Bible enjoyed a peaceful period of 1,000 years. The Bible gained respect, and was consider higher compared to other books. After the 1,000 years period, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) and Baruch Spinoza (1632-77) started to attack the Bible with their criticisms, when Jean Astruc (1684-1766) started his criticism to the Bible, than a wave of long attacks to every detail of the Bible. Bernard Rom said, "No other book has experienced chopped, cut, investigated, examined and maligned."⁵ Nevertheless, the Bible is the most widely published book in the world.

The Bible is also the most widely translated book than any other book. The Bible is also the first translated book (Septuagint, the Old Testament translation to Greek, circa 250 BC). The Bible has been translated to different languages, more than any other book, this fact support the claims that the Bible is revealed by God.³

The Unity and Continuity of Biblical Story

The unity and continuity of Biblical writings indicate that those writings were produced under one guidance and one supernatural mind. Imagine 40 people that lived in different places, different jobs, different educational backgrounds and lived in different ages, consist of 1,500 years. Each author has few lines of story, and amazingly when those lines combined together, they became a very interesting and wonderful story, those lines were connected and complimentary to each other. If this thing can happen, than it is an evidence that

the authors of those stories are directed by one mind.

⁵ Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Christian Evidences*, (Chicago Moody Press, 1957), 233.

⁶ Douglas Stuart Gordon D. *Hermeneutik Menafsirkan Alkitab Firman Tuhan dengan Tepat*, (Malang: Gandrum Mas 2011), 23

Bible has around 40 authors, and each of them represent each aspect of human lives. Moses, a political leader, educated in Egypt; Joshua, a military general; Solomon, a king; Amos, a cattleman; Daniel, a prime minister; Nehemiah, a king's servant; Luke, a doctor; Matthew, a tax collector; Peter, a fisherman; Paul, a rabbi, and many others, wrote 66 books in 1,500 years, consist of 60 generations (some said 40 generations). They wrote from different places. Moses was in the wilderness; Jeremiah, was in underground jail; Daniel was in a palace; Paul was in a prison; Luke was on his journey; John was in the island of Patmos. They wrote about their happy journey and disappointments. These writers wrote about the history of humanity, the fall, the redemption and the eternal goal of humanity in harmony and continuity from Genesis to Revelation. Surely, the Bible is the Word of God.

Conclusion

The Bible is not boring. The Bible is very rich and varied in testimony which is very harmonious in its wonderful beauty and uniqueness. Because of the variety within it, it can supply the needs of humanity throughout history. God does not reveal Himself to humanity without any interval, instead He revealed Himself little by little, from generation to generation. Whether it was revealed through the pen of Moses in the wilderness, or through Apostle Paul when he was in Roman prison, those book communications that are inspired the same Holy Spirit. The understanding of the "progressive revelation" has a role in plating the understanding of the unity of the Bible. Though it was written in different generations, the truths that can be found in the Old Testament and the New Testament cannot be separated and not contradictory.

The Old Testament, through prophecies and symbols, states about the coming savior; the New Testament, through the life of Jesus Christ, states that the coming Savior is the revelation of the gospel. God calls human beings to know Him through studying His Word. In that Bible itself, can be found abundant blessings.

Human beings can reveal it for themselves, because the Bible is "profitable for teaching,

The fact that God gave the Bible is a proof of God's love to humanity. The term "revelation" means God communicates to humanity about who He is and how to have a relationship with Him. These are the things that cannot be known if God did not reveal them in the Bible. Even though the revelation of God in the Bible was given progressively, in a period of 1,500 years, the Bible has always contains everything that is needed by humanity in order to know God and have a real relationship with Him. If the Bible is the true Word of God, than the Bible is the highest authority in terms of faith, religion and morality. The question that has to be asked to one's self is how to know that the Bible is the Word of God, and not merely a good book? What is the uniqueness of the Bible that makes it different from the other religious books? Is there any evidence that the Bible is the true Word of God? These are the kind of questions that we need to answer if we want to seriously research about the claim that the Bible is the true Word of God, divinely inspired, and perfect in everything that correlates to faith and its applications.

Interpretation: The Evidence of God's Inspiration The evidences support the claim that the Bible is inspired. The combined evidences show that the only strong explanation about Bible's existence is that the Bible has a divine origin.

Endurance, Translation, Circulation of the Bible

One of the evidences that support Bible inspiration is the amazing phenomenon of the Bible's endurance, translation and circulations. The Bible can endure time. For an ancient book to endure all the threats since

for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

the time of Moses until the present time is really amazing. Production and circulation of the Book that was written in the ancient time was really limited, and produced with hand writings. Those ancient books faced the threats of fire, storm, insects, damage, abandoned, fungi, etc. The endurance of the Bible is beyond imagination.

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