

KNOWLEDGE

The Bible: Is it Reliable?

The Bible: The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. From <<http://www.sbc.net/aboutus/basicbeliefs.asp>>

Arguments "Against" the Reliability of the Bible

Issues related to:

Integrity

- The Bible has been altered/doesn't include all of the books (i.e. other "gospels")
- The Bible was written too long after the events actually occurred
- The Bible wasn't written in English/ has been corrupted through translation
- The Bible's authors aren't known for sure

Inerrancy

- The Bible is full of inconsistencies/ contradictions

Accuracy

- The Bible isn't true/historical (fiction)
- The Bible has been disproven by science
- The Bible's authors were biased so we can't trust them

Inspiration

- The Bible was written by man, not God

Interpretation

- The Bible can be interpreted differently by different people

Next Week: The Bible: Is it Reliable?

Inspiration, Translation, & Interpretation

1. Research the arguments and evidence in support of the Bible (**inspiration, translation, interpretation**)
 - a. What kind of evidence do we have in support of the Bible's reliability?
 - b. Which are the best arguments and why?
 - c. Should we avoid any arguments and why?
2. Research the arguments in opposition to the Bible (**inspiration, translation, interpretation**)
 - a. Are there additional arguments against the Bible's reliability to add to the list?
 - b. What are the most common arguments and how do we refute them?
 - c. Any other observations about the nature of arguments against the Bible that we should note?

The Bible's Reliability: Notes & Discussion

INTEGRITY --- ACCURACY

Questions Related to Authorship

Q. How can we be certain who really wrote the books of the Bible?

"Moses did not write the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) and Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did not write the Gospels... Many of the books of the New Testament are pseudonymous – written not by the apostles but by later writers claiming to be apostles." – Bart Ehrman

Objections:

- Moses couldn't have written about things that happened after he died, or his own death.
- Traditions naming authors are too far removed from the actual writings.
- Plenty of other books and letters were forged and appeared in the name of other disciples, etc.
- Christian scholars themselves say we don't know who wrote the New Testament Gospels.
- Most of the apostles were illiterate and could not write.

Response:

Who wrote the Bible?

- **God** is the author, who divinely inspired approximately **40** men of diverse backgrounds over the course of **1,500 years** to write the Bible.

What about Moses?¹

- Moses is credited with writing the Pentateuch (aka the **Law** or **Torah**) – the first 5 books of the OT (creation > patriarchs > Israel in Egypt > exodus > Promised Land)

One theory is that portions of these books were written by 4+ authors (or groups of authors) over many centuries and then edited together

- Skeptics argue that Moses wasn't an eye-witness to the early events he wrote of (Genesis); however,
 - He could have obtained his information by **divine revelation**
 - He could have obtained his information from previously written **texts that had been passed down**
 - He could have obtained his information from **oral** tradition from his ancestors
- Skeptics also argue that Moses couldn't have written about his death or later events (Deuteronomy); however,
 - It is not necessarily uncommon for an **obituary** to be added to the end of someone's work after they die (i.e. Joshua)
 - He may have written about an event based on **prophecy** (i.e. Israel's future kings)

¹ Ken Ham; Bodie Hodge. How Do We Know the Bible is True? (Kindle Location 1577). Master Books.

Reasons to believe Moses wrote the Pentateuch

- Biblical witness **within** the 5 books themselves
 - Exodus 17:14; 24:4; 34:27; Numbers 33:1–2; Deuteronomy 31:9–11
- Biblical witness elsewhere in the **Old Testament**
 - Joshua 1:8; 8:31–32; 1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 14:6; 21:8; Ezra 6:18; Nehemiah 13:1; Daniel 9:11–13; Malachi 4:4
- Biblical witness in the **New Testament**
 - Matthew 19:8; John 5:45–47; 7:19; Acts 3:22; Romans 10:5; Mark 12:26
- Moses' qualifications
 - He received a royal Egyptian **education**
 - Was an **eye-witness** to the events recorded in Exodus to Deuteronomy
 - Was a **prophet** of God
- Bad assumptions and reasoning by those who support the theory of multiple authors:
 - They assumed their **conclusion**
 - They assumed that the art of **writing** didn't come about until King David's time
 - They used text **inconsistently** (only when it supported their argument)
 - To date, no supporting **manuscript** evidence of multiple and separate documents (or fragments) has been found
 - Until the last few centuries, **uniform** Jewish testimony was of Moses as the author

What about the Apostles?²

- The **Apostles** are credited with writing the New Testament (Gospels, history, letters and revelation)

Multiple theories exist that question whether we can know for sure who wrote the Gospels, as well as other NT books

- Skeptics argue that the authors of the gospels aren't named within the text, therefore they may have been forged (or falsely attributed); however,
 - The names of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were associated with the gospels of the same name from the very early days of the first **church fathers** (*Irenaeus, Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, Papias, Jerome, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Gregory, Polycarp*)
 - No other authors have been **suggested** for them (only 'anonymous')
 - All manuscript evidence (5,800+) attests to the named authors, **none disputes it**
 - It wasn't uncommon for **biographies** in the same time period not to name the author
 - Forgeries existed in ancient writings, both Christian and non, but were **rejected** immediately

² "Who Wrote the Gospels?", RadicalTruth.net, <http://radicaltruth.net/index.php/learn/radical-truth-christianity/66-who-wrote-the-gospels> (January 16, 2016)

- Skeptics argue that traditions naming the authors of the gospels are too long after they were written; however,
 - The **early church fathers** were in a much better position to know the history of the texts and who they were attributed to
 - The same **standard** of evidence isn't applied to other ancient texts
- Skeptics argue that the apostles were illiterate and couldn't have written the gospel texts; however,
 - This argument is based on a (intentional) misinterpretation of **Acts 4:13**
- Skeptics argue that even "Christian scholars" don't know who wrote the gospels; however,
 - It's important to determine **who** they are referring to (i.e. Bart Ehrman)

Reasons to believe the Apostles wrote the Gospels

- **Early** attestation – documented in the earliest manuscripts, by early church fathers
- **Multiple** attestation – numerous early church fathers, thousands of manuscripts
- No **alternative** authors named/suggested
- No compelling **argument** to the contrary

Q. How can we be sure the authors were truthful?

Objections:

- The authors were biased and therefore untrustworthy.
- Isn't it likely that the authors embellished their writing to further their agenda?

Response:

- Skeptics argue that the authors of the gospels are eager to promote Christianity and therefore we can't trust them (bias); however,
 - If that is true, **we can't trust anyone!!!**
 - Every author has a **point of view** they are trying to promote
 - Credit was given to **Mark & Luke** as authors, not forgeries
 - The authors lacked a **motive** (money, power) for lying

Questions Related to Accuracy

Q. Isn't the Bible just a bunch of made up stories?

"The Exodus probably did not happen as described in the Old Testament. The conquest of the Promised Land is probably based on legend....The historical narratives of the Old Testament are filled with legendary fabrications..." – Bart Ehrman

Objections:

- The Bible is just a bunch of fairy tales for children to teach morals.
- The people and places listed in the Bible never existed because they haven't been found.

Response:³

- The role of archaeology is not to **"prove"** the Bible; instead, it is to
 - Provide the **background** for interpreting the Bible accurately
 - Anchor the events in the **history** and geography of the time
 - Build **confidence** in the revelation of God
- The Bible has been proven accurate "historically" by archaeological finds.
 - References to **towns**, as well as names and words, mentioned in the Bible have been found on "excavation texts"
 - Missing **people** have been found/validated (King Sargon, King Belshazzar)
 - Missing **people groups** have been located (Hittites, Horites)
 - Missing **places** have been found (Ophir, sites along the exodus route)
 - Manuscripts & articles have been uncovered (Dead Sea Scrolls, Ketef Hinnom Amulets)

Q. Isn't the Bible irrelevant since it has been disproven by science?

Objections:

- The Bible makes all kinds of scientifically inaccurate statements.
- Evolution* disproves the Bible.

Response:

Things to keep in mind when considering apparent conflicts between the Bible and science:⁴

- The vast majority of biblical teaching and scientific claims neither support nor conflict
- Many "scientific errors" are due to **misinterpretation**, variation in numbers, etc.
- Scientific discoveries have very often supported biblical assertions:
 - Evidence that the universe had a **beginning**
 - Evidence that the universe is **fine-tuned** and delicately designed to support life
 - Evidence supporting that life originated from an **intelligent creator**
 - Evidence that discredits gradual evolution as sufficient for **complex** living things
 - **Archaeological** confirmations of biblical claims
- We can face areas of conflict honestly but **confidently**

³ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "How Has Archaeology Corroborated the Bible?" in The Apologetics Study Bible (eds. Ted Cabal, et al; Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 1148

⁴ J. P. Moreland, "What is the Relationship Between Science and the Bible?" in The Apologetics Study Bible (eds. Ted Cabal, et al; Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2007), 1314