



## Lesson 6: Evidence for the Inspiration of the Bible

### Examining the Claims of Inspiration for other Books

#### WHY CONSIDER THE CLAIMS OF INSPIRATION FOR OTHER BOOKS?

There are many people in the world that believe in the existence of God and that He has revealed His will to mankind in a book. However, not all believe the Bible is that book. A few other books claim to be inspired by God; comparing their claims to those of the Bible will only bolster our faith in the Bible! Remember that as Christians we have a duty to share and defend our faith (1 Peter 3:15). There is no doubt that we can do a better job of this if we have a basic understanding of the false revelations on which some base their faith.

#### THE KORAN (OR QURAN)

The Koran is regarded as the holy book of the religion of Islam. Muslims claim that it was revealed from God to Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, who was born in 570 AD in the Arabian city of Mecca. As the story is told, when he was about forty years of age Muhammad began to frequent a mountain cave in the vicinity of Mecca. There he claims to have begun receiving revelations from a god named Allah through the angel Gabriel. These "revelations" were first shared with his wife, then with close friends and Meccans at large. Those who believed began to memorize and record Muhammad's words; later (after Muhammad's death) they collected their records and remembrances into the book now known as the Koran.

- The Koran is of slightly less length than the New Testament. It is divided into one hundred fourteen chapters called "Surahs". Individual verses are called "Ayahs". Chapters are arranged in order of decreasing size.
- Muslims believe that the Koran is Allah's perfect and complete revelation as it exists in the Arabic language. They claim that it "cannot be fully translated into any other language"; an English translation of the Koran is therefore considered "a human interpretation in a different language that falls far short of the forcefulness of the original book." (Abdalati, *Islam in Focus*, 1980, pp. 3-4). Muslims consider the Koran to be the only inspired book that has been protected by God from corruption. However, some significant textual variations exist between the text of today's Koran and more ancient manuscripts.

#### Issues with the inspiration of the Koran:

- **No miraculous confirmation:** Islam's prophet, Muhammad, performed no miracles to demonstrate that his message was from God. He claimed the message itself was a miracle. That is a little like saying, "This message is from God because I said so."
- **The Koran was not written by inspired men, but by divisive disciples.** Muhammad was illiterate; he could neither read nor write. Among his disciples, none were inspired or ever claimed to be. Yet, they are the ones responsible for writing down Muhammad's words and collecting them into the Koran. Upon Muhammad's death,

these same disciples could not agree upon who should be his successor (or Caliph). There was much intrigue and treachery among them, resulting in, among

other things, the major division in Islam between the Sunnites and Shi'ites. Each of these groups claims a different disciple of Muhammad's as his true successor.

- **The addition of the Sunnahs.** Islam could not be practiced in most of its modern forms without guidance from the *Traditions of the Prophet* known as *Sunnahs*. Yet, through the centuries since Muhammad, literally thousands of these traditions have been fabricated and forged, so that it is with great difficulty that even Muslims can determine which are genuine. Reliance on the *Sunnahs* proves that The Koran is NOT a complete and perfect revelation from God.

#### THE BOOK OF MORMON

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (otherwise known as the LDS or Mormons) was founded by Joseph Smith in the mid 1800's. As a boy, Smith's family lived in what was then Ontario County, New York. He was brought up amid the religious confusion and denominational rivalries of his time. Smith claimed that at the age of 14 or 15, God and Christ appeared to him and informed him that all the existing religious groups were wrong and he should join none of them. Later, he said, an angel named Moroni appeared to him; eventually he was guided to a pair of Golden Plates hidden in the hills of New York on which were written reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics. From these, Smith professes to have translated the *Book of Mormon* during the years 1827-1829. In translating, Smith alleged that Moroni provided him with a supernatural tool (the "Urim and Thummim") so that he could decipher the writing correctly; Smith dictated much of what was on the plates to Oliver Cowdery, a friend who worked as his scribe.

#### Issues with the Inspiration of the Book of Mormon.

- **Plagiarism from the King James Bible.** Many verses and even whole chapters of the King James Version of the Bible are found word for word in the *Book of Mormon* – including interpolations and mistranslations! (Compare Isaiah 13 to 2 Nephi 23).
- **Story taken from previously published uninspired books.** Several books written prior to the publishing of the *Book of Mormon* include stories to the effect that American Indians are the descendants of the Israelites. Among these works were Elias Boudinot's *Star in the West* (1816), Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews* (1823), and Josiah Priest's *The Wonders of Nature and Providence* (1824) (W.M. Jones, *A Critical Study of Book of Mormon Sources*, 1964). These books use exactly the same scriptures and reasoning to support their theory concerning the American Indians that early Mormon preachers used. On top of this, a novel written in the early 1800's by Solomon Spaulding entitled "The Manuscript Found" had almost exactly the same plot as the *Book of Mormon*.
- **Unfaithfulness of Witnesses.** The three witnesses who testify in the introduction to the *Book of Mormon* to seeing the plates, from which The Book of Mormon was translated, all fell away from the Mormon faith in later years. Concerning his part in transcribing the *Book of Mormon* from Joseph Smith's dictation, Oliver Cowdery said, "I have sometimes had reasons of skepticism, in which I did seriously wonder whether the Prophet and I were men in our sober senses when he would be translating from plates...and the plates not be in sight at all."

- **Weak view of inspiration.** It is hard to understand what Mormons mean when they claim inspiration for the *Book of Mormon* and other works of Joseph Smith. Errors in these books don't seem to bother them. Their concept of inspiration is not that a book inspired by God must be inerrant. The *Book of Mormon* itself contains several statements indicating that there could be errors in it because it was written according to human knowledge. Jacob 7:26 states, "I conclude this record declaring that I have written according to the best of my knowledge," and Mormon 8:12 says, "And whoso receiveth this record, and shall not condemn it because of the imperfections which are in it, the same shall know of greater things than these..." (see also 1 Nephi 1:3; 19:6; Jacob 1:2; Mormon 9:32-33; 3 Nephi 8:1-2; 5:16).
- **Contradictions in Mormon Writings.** The "inspired" Mormon writings not only contradict the Bible, they are frequently at odds with one another. For instance, Jacob 2:23-24 says that polygamy is "abominable" before the Lord, but *Doctrines and Covenants* 132:61-62 says that a man who takes ten wives is justified.
- **Changes made in the "inspired" Book of Mormon.** Literally hundreds of changes have been made in *The Book of Mormon* and other LDS scriptures since their original publications. These changes are much more than what is needed to correct typographical errors or the many grammatical errors found in Smith's translation. If the *Book of Mormon* is God's word and has been perfectly translated by Smith, how can men change it?

#### CATHOLIC APOCRYPHA

"Apocrypha" means hidden. It is a word used by Jewish Rabbis in the Talmud to describe works that were not part of inspired Scripture. It is commonly used today to refer to the books included in the Catholic Bible that are not typically found in other Bibles. The Catholics call these books "Deuteroconical". Of the 12 additional writings that are sometimes included in the Catholic Bible this much can be said:

- They are not included in the Hebrew Old Testament preserved by the Jews. This is quite significant in light of what Paul says in Romans 3:1-2.
- They do not claim to be the inspired word of God. Unlike inspired Scriptures, these books contain no statements such as "thus saith the Lord" or "these are the words of God."
- They contain teachings contrary to the accepted biblical books.
- They are not quoted by the Lord Jesus or the apostles in the New Testament, while every part of the Old Testament is quoted.
- Some of these books though written as history are fictional.
- The Apocryphal books were rejected from the canon of Scripture by the early church leaders.
- Even the Roman Catholic Church did not dogmatically declare the Apocrypha to be inspired until the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century.
- *If* these books are in fact inspired, we would not be under them as Christians anyway since they are all placed in the Old Testament.

## HINDU SCRIPTURES

The primary scriptures of Hinduism are known as the *Vedas*. Hindus do not claim that the Vedic scriptures were revealed directly from God in the way we think of the Bible being inspired. In Hindu tradition, the existence of the *Vedas* is credited to Brahma, the creator-god of Hinduism. But the *Vedas* represents truth that was "discovered" in the personal lives of Hindu saints or Rishis (A.T. Embree, *Hindu Tradition*, 1966, p. 6). The *Vedas* are the "expression of what has been seen through intuitive perception," not what has been revealed by God (V. Raghavan, *Introduction to the Hindu Scriptures* 1953, p. 266). Neither miracle, nor fulfilled prophecy, nor internal consistency can be offered as proof that Hindu scripture is from God. The *Vedas* were composed and transmitted *orally* for hundreds of years from about 1,500 to 500 B.C. Even after they ceased being created, they were not written down for several more centuries, beginning in the first century B.C.

## BUDDHIST SCRIPTURES

The basic scriptures of traditional Buddhism are the *Pali Canon*, known to Buddhists as the *Tipitaka* (meaning "three baskets"). These three groups of writings cover the discipline, discourses and philosophy of a man named Siddhartha Gautama, otherwise known as the Buddha. It is believed that Buddha lived and taught in India in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Buddha's teaching was first memorized and then transmitted by word of mouth. One Buddhist scholar wrote, "We do not know exactly when and where the teachings were first reduced to writing." (K.K.S. Ch'en, *Buddhism: The Light of Asia*, 1968, p. 30). He goes on to say that, "the earliest written compilation of Buddhist scripture was made in Pali (an Indian literary language) during the first century B.C." No one claims that these writings were ever inspired, and since Buddhism does not allow for a personal Creator-God, they could not have been. At best, they represent the teachings of a man concerning what he perceived to be the "Path to Deliverance."

## QUESTIONS ON THE CLAIMS OF INSPIRATION OF OTHER BOOKS:

What do you consider to be the most glaring weakness in the claim of inspiration for each of the following books? How do the claims of these books to be inspired compare to the claim of the Bible?

1. The Koran
2. The Book of Mormon
3. The extra books in some Catholic Bibles.
4. The Hindu Scriptures (The Vedas)
5. The Buddhist Scriptures (the Pali Canon)