
Creation Answers

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Who does this newsletter?

This newsletter is produced by Wayne Spencer on a Quarterly basis. Its purpose is to bring creation research within the reach of Christians and provide up-to-date reliable information on creation issues. Wayne Spencer is a creation author and former teacher who has presented papers at the International Conference on Creationism and has published in various creation publications, such as the Creation Research Society Quarterly, Creation magazine, the Journal of Creation, and Origins (from the Biblical Creation Society, UK).

This newsletter is meant to help people plug into creation resources and get informed about creation and evolution. It is provided free of charge on request. Using the free Adobe Acrobat Reader is necessary for viewing the newsletter. There are no restrictions in copying this newsletter or passing it on to others. To request to be placed on the e-mail list, send a request to wspencer@creationanswers.net.

More information on Wayne Spencer's education and publications can be found on the creationanswers.net web site. You'll also find many other resources. <http://creationanswers.net>

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A Personal Note from Wayne Spencer

Greetings,

I hope you are having a good holiday. I want to welcome new readers who have recently requested my newsletter. I welcome feedback or suggestions for future articles.

I would like to make a request of readers of this newsletter. If you use a smart phone to access the internet on your cell phone, I would like feedback regarding how my website works with your phone. Please just send me an email with what kind of phone you have and try my website and let me know if you have any problems. I will be doing some reorganization of material on my website. I hope to be working in coming months to make my website so it works better on phones. I may have news about this in future issues.

In this issue I begin a two part article series on Why Believe the Bible. I have wanted to write an article on this for a long time. This is my attempt to communicate some things that have helped me trust God's word. Today Christians are not always prepared for challenging ideas that come along questioning the Bible. I hope this will really encourage your faith.

I recently published an article in Creation magazine, for Creation Ministries International in Australia. It is called "Planets Around Other Stars." Also don't miss the article in this issue about the amazing Sacoglossan Sea Slugs. The short piece on Gliese 581g is about a report saying there was a possibly habitable planet around star Gliese 581. But now astronomers dispute that the planet even exists.

Wayne Spencer, M.S., Physics

Why Believe the Bible? Part 1

In a world with so many competing ideas and so many different churches, there are competing ideas about the Bible. Some would view it as having good moral advice for people to live by, but not see it as a good historical source. Some would view the Bible in much the same way as other ancient religious “holy books.” The Hindus have holy books, as do Muslims, Mormons, and others. Among Christians there are also a variety of ideas prevalent about the Bible and how it should be interpreted. There will always be different views of various details in the Bible by Christians, but Christians should fundamentally agree on the basic reliability of the Bible. Though seminaries train students regarding the Bible, even in seminaries professors will often have a variety of different views of the inerrancy of the Bible. Thus I have observed that seminary students sometimes struggle with trying to explain the inerrancy of the Bible.

In these articles I will address evidence for the reliability of the Bible as a set of documents. We can trust the Bible. But we do need reasons to trust it, so that when we face life’s challenges, we can see past what we feel and have confidence in what the Bible tells us. Before dealing with how the Old and New Testaments are reliable, we must clarify the issue of inerrancy. At least, this is my own view of inerrancy.

Inerrancy and Translations

Biblical inerrancy is the concept that since the documents in the Bible were inspired by God, they were written down without any kind of error. I will follow Josh McDowell and others and point out that there are two points to understand about inerrancy. First, it was the original manuscripts when they were first penned by the Bible writers that were without error. Second, the Bible is without error in

everything it affirms. Both of these points require a little explanation.

None of the original manuscripts of the books of the Bible that were written by the writers exist anywhere in the world. But the books of the Bible were carefully copied and translated over the centuries. Inerrancy holds that when the original manuscripts were penned by the Biblical writers, there was supernatural help that prevented them from making any mistake. However, there was nothing supernatural about the copying process. Nor was there anything supernatural about the translation process. Copying and translating are just hard work mostly, though God has helped people in these efforts as well, but not as in Biblical inspiration. Bible translators believe in and depend on God’s help but they do not expect that their work of translation will be inerrant. Yet when the original manuscripts were written, they were without error. Bible scholars have described Biblical inspiration as “verbal” and “plenary.” To say it was “verbal” means that each word is inspired. To say “plenary” means that everything in the whole Bible was inspired.

There are many providential things God seemed to arrange through history so that his word would be preserved. But the copying and translation of the Bible has been dependent on human knowledge and skill. The first writing of the Bible books however, was supernatural. II Peter 1:21 describes the inspiration process this way. **“For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”**

It is important to understand that inerrancy is about the original documents that were written by hand in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek long ago. You see, there are copying errors and there are translation errors. But if an issue is only found in one copy, that does not make it impossible to know what the text should be because there are other better copies that can be compared to. With translations into

different languages, if there is a question in one language translation but the same issue does not affect the best Greek or Hebrew texts we have, then it is not an inerrancy issue. For something to truly be an inerrancy issue, one would have to show that there is a problem in the Bible that exists in the original language as well as in translations. This is often not understood by skeptics who criticize the Bible and attempt to point out verses that have what they think is some type of inaccurate information.

There are passages where you can compare different English translations of the Bible and find differences. But these are not inerrancy issues. They are just uncertainties or limitations due to the ability of translators to translate. They may be limitations due to differences in the nature of the two languages involved also.

For example, Genesis 10:21 mentions Noah's sons Shem and Japheth. The NIV Bible says Japheth is the older of the two brothers, but the New American Standard Bible says Shem was older than Japheth. In the Hebrew, it is apparently difficult to tell which way it should be. This minor thing is clarified in the marginal notes in both the NIV and the NAS versions, but you might think these two Bibles contradict each other on first reading. This is a translation issue, not an inerrancy issue. Note that I could have picked other translations and used other examples as well. There is no perfect translation. It was the original manuscripts penned by the Bible writers that were perfect. We may not be sure how to translate it on the relative ages of Noah's sons, but that does not mean there is a real error in the Bible. It just means the translators were not perfect. This is one reason there are times to compare Bible versions, or find out what the original Greek or Hebrew say. Furthermore, it has little significance which son of Noah was older.

Understanding the difference between an inerrancy issue and a

translation issue allows you to answer many issues brought up by skeptics who challenge inerrancy. For example, skeptics have often claimed that Leviticus 11:6 is factually incorrect because it says Rabbits "chew the cud." This is in connection with directions about clean and unclean foods for the ancient Israelites under the Law of Moses.

Skeptics will say the Bible is factually in error because when it says "chewing the cud," that is referring to what biologists call ruminants. Other mammals such as cows or goats are ruminants since they have two stomachs and they regurgitate their food to rechew it. Rabbits cannot regurgitate. Yet rabbits actually do rechew their food sometimes, but in a different way. It is something seldom seen by people who raise rabbits, probably because they are fed better in captivity. Rabbits sometimes do what is called refection. This is where they chew on some of their fecal pellets, mixing them with what they are eating. This mixes necessary bacteria with the new food. This is a translation issue, not an inerrancy issue. Rabbits chewing their pellets with their food could look like what ruminants do, though they are not technically ruminants. Rabbits do tend to chew for a long time as well.

Thus it is incorrect to take Scripture as saying that rabbits are ruminants. Scripture is using the terms it uses to describe what animals are seen doing. It is not using a technical description based on the animals internal anatomy. Thus I think that for translators to use the term "chewing the cud" in relation to rabbits is probably an improper English translation because of how the term is normally understood today. Leviticus could have been reworded. But the Bible does not have a factual error on this because it does not address whether rabbits are ruminants or not.

The Second point about inerrancy is that the Bible is without error in everything it affirms. This basically means you can't take Scripture out of context to make it say something that is incorrect and not intended

by the Biblical writers. For example, Rahab was a prostitute in ancient Jericho and Rahab was commended for what she did in helping the Israelites. But you cannot use this to say that the Bible condones prostitution. The issue of rabbits “chewing the cud” is also an example of this. The Bible says essentially that they rechew their food, it does not actually address technically whether rabbits are ruminants or not. Thus to argue there is an error about rabbits is to claim the Bible teaches something it does not affirm. The goal in interpreting the Bible is to try to figure out how the Biblical writer, or how the original readers, would have understood it.

The Bible is Unique

The Bible is often considered by many to be like other types of ancient literature or like other religious holy books. But we should not forget the uniqueness of the Bible. In his two volume set of books, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell has an excellent section on this topic. The Bible was written over a period of about 1500 years. This is based on the time from when Moses wrote Genesis and the Pentateuch about 1400 B.C. to about 90 A.D. when the book of Revelation was written by John the Apostle. There is uncertainty on the date of the writing of the book of Job. It may be possible Job was written even earlier than Moses' time, but that Moses (or someone) compiled it together into the form we have.

There were over 40 writers of the original Biblical manuscripts. They were of many different backgrounds and levels of education. They wrote in different places, with different moods, and on three different continents. They also wrote about many controversial subjects and wrote in different literary genre, such as narrative and poetry. Yet the Bible contains one consistent coherent message from beginning to end. Many have said the Bible has contradictions, but when you look into the

details of those claims, they just evaporate. I do not know of anything where anyone has been able to demonstrate a real contradiction in the Bible. All the claimed contradictions can be answered by careful exegesis and interpretation, especially in the light of the points made above about translation issues. There are passages difficult to understand where even the best scholars may not be sure of the meaning. But passages that we struggle understanding cannot be taken as an indication of errors. Thus, one evidence of the inspiration and reliability of the Bible is the internal evidence of its own consistency with itself.

This is no small thing. Many people do not fully appreciate this point. To compare to the Bible, you have to look at how well we know the texts of works from well known writers of the past. For instance, the texts from Shakespeare's plays have hundreds of readings that are in dispute, where scholars are not sure what the text was actually intended to say.

Another example would be the writings of J.R.R. Tolkien. I am a major fan of the writings of Tolkien on Middle Earth, including *Lord of the Rings*. Tolkien was clearly a genius. He wrote his stories of Middle Earth over many years during his life. But among the thousands of pages he wrote in his stories of Middle Earth, there are contradictory details sometimes which scholars are not sure how to resolve to this day. These are just questions over what the final intent was of Tolkien over what the text of his story was supposed to say. Even someone of the brilliance of Tolkien who worked on his stories for his whole life could not keep all the details consistent. But with the Bible, there are so many manuscripts to compare to that there really is no significant question over what the text says. There are a few passages in the gospels of the New Testament where it is not certain if they should be included in the Bible. But those sections do not raise any real doctrinal problems. Moreover, we do know which

verses are in question, and they are indicated in modern Bibles. Thus, it really is miraculous how self-consistent the Bible is. Since it is God's word, it never ever contradicts itself.

The Bible is unique in all literature. In the 1700's French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau made this comment about the Bible. *"Behold the works of our philosophers; with all their pompous diction, how mean and contemptible they are in comparison with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book at once so simple and sublime should be merely the work of man?"*

The Bible has also been of influence in history beyond any other book. Professor William Foxworth Albright, a famous archeologist, praised the ancient history of the Bible. He said, "Hebrew national tradition excels all others in its clear picture of tribal and family origins." This is part of a much longer quote in Josh McDowell's book. Albright goes on to say that many ancient peoples wrote their own "history" in a very distorted ways. The founding leader was often presented as a god. Often fanciful tales were inserted about some miraculous beginning of that leader or of their people. One result of the fanciful origin tales many ancient peoples have is that the true history is unknown. But in the Bible, we have the real history. The Biblical accounts also present the people in a totally realistic way, telling of their failures as well as their successes. Professor Albright also described the "Table of Nations" in Genesis 10 as "an astonishingly accurate document." Both the Old and New Testaments are historically accurate. There are always some unanswered questions about the Bible and history where we have inadequate historical information. In fact, the Bible is not only accurate in recounting history, it actually has predictive prophecy about history, which we will consider in Part 2.

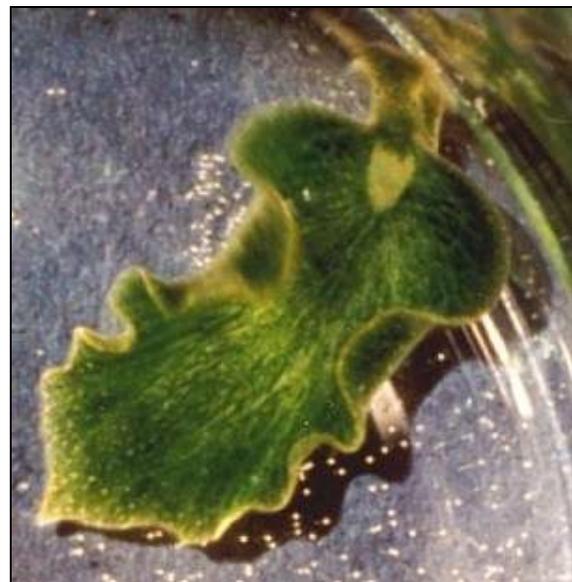
The Bible has survived against many attacks from intellectuals and attempts to ban it or burn it by some in the past.

Sometimes in history, such as in ancient Rome it was illegal for Christians to own Biblical writings. The infamous French philosopher Voltaire, who died in 1778, once said that by 100 years after his time Christianity would no longer exist and would pass into history. But what really happened was that Voltaire passed into history and 50 years after his death, the Geneva Bible Society used Voltaire's own press and his house to produce Bibles!

In Part 2 of Why Believe the Bible we will look at specific things about the Old and New Testaments that show them to be reliable. I will end with a quote from Proverbs 30:5, "Every word of God is flawless, he is a shield to all who take refuge in him."

Sacoglossan Sea Slugs

In my December 2003 issue of Creation Answers I wrote about the nudibranch sea slug. The sea slugs are very strange and beautiful organisms. They are a favorite to me as an example of intelligent design. ([Click here](#) to go to the 2003 article on Sea Slugs.) A recent paper in the Journal of Creation pointed out another variety of



Elysia chlorotica - a photosynthetic sea slug

Sea Slug that has an amazing ability. This group of sea slugs are known as the Sacoglossa. They eat algae and they are able to use the chloroplasts from the algae and then use those chloroplasts to do photosynthesis. This is an impressive thing for an animal to do. The slug saves the chloroplasts within its own body. Some of these slugs look green as a result. They can appear similar to a leaf. The chloroplasts are placed into special membranes the slug has for the purpose of preserving them.

The chloroplasts would not function simply by being placed in the slug. The chloroplasts are taken out of the cells of the algae and are moved to a very different cellular environment in the sea slug. The chloroplast is thus being placed into an animal cell, yet it will function! In one species, the *Elysia chlorotica* (see photo above) the chloroplasts are able to survive for up to 10 months. Scientists have found that these slugs have some DNA that is like the DNA for photosynthesis in the algae. So the sea slugs have a designed-in ability to use the algae's chloroplasts. Thus the slugs, which are animals, can get energy from the Sun like a plant!

Evolutionist scientists attempt to explain this with a process called Lateral Gene Transfer (LGT). There are two major types of cells in living things, procaryotic and eucaryotic. Eucaryotic cells have a nucleus and all complex organisms have these cells. Procaryotic organisms cells do not have a nucleus. LGT has been observed many times in procaryotic organisms, but not in eucaryotic organisms. In Lateral Gene Transfer, sections of genes are essentially taken from another organism and become part of the new organism. The LGT process does not involve normal reproduction. For it to happen from algae to an animal like the sea slug would be unlikely. There are other examples of the adoption of chloroplasts like this by other organisms not sea slugs. Thus the process

would have to happen many times to explain all the cases. A better explanation is that the Creator made both the algae and creatures like *Elysia chlorotica* to use chloroplasts for photosynthesis. To read an evolutionary article on the sacoglossan sea slugs, [click here](#).

Exoplanet Gliese-581g?

Scientists are not generally known for their imagination. But, some discoveries regarding extrasolar planets really stimulate the imaginations of scientists. I have written a number of articles regarding planets around other stars. Most of the reports of newly discovered exoplanets are valid, but there are occasional mistakes and disputed cases. On September 29, 2010 an announcement was released from the University of Santa Cruz and the Carnegie Institution in Washington regarding two additional exoplanets just discovered in the Gliese-581 star system. Designated planets f and g; this means these objects would be two out of six planets orbiting this star. Gliese-581g generated a lot of excitement among scientists because it truly seemed to be in the habitable zone for this star. Being in the "habitable zone" to astronomers means they believe the temperature range on the planet may allow for liquid water on the surface and carbon dioxide if it has an atmosphere.

This prompted scientists to suggest that habitable planets may be relatively easy to find in our galaxy. Based on its distance from the star, planet g would have a temperature variation similar to Earth. The Gliese-581 star is a variable star. Though the Gliese-581 star varies in brightness, observations of it report its magnitude varies by only about one half of one percent over a period of a few weeks. It would likely vary more than this over periods of perhaps several years. Gliese-581g was estimated to have a minimum mass of about 3 times that of Earth. It would lie at about 0.146 AU from

its star (closer to the star than Mercury is in our system) and it would orbit its star in 36.6 days. The Gliese-581g planet would be close enough to the star that it would probably be in synchronous rotation. This is like our Moon in relation to Earth. It means the time for one spin on its axis is the same as the time for one orbit. This is why our Moon always keeps the same side facing the Earth. The initial reports on Gliese-581g did not have any information about the planet except for an estimate of its mass. Note that there are a number of factors that would affect the temperatures on a planet, such as the eccentricity of its orbit, its tilt and spin rate, the tilt of its orbit, and whether it has an atmosphere or not. So even if a planet is the right distance from a star to be similar to Earth, other factors could make the planet inhospitable to life.

The Gliese-581 system has been the object of many studies using the Doppler-radial velocity technique for detecting extrasolar planets, but planetary transits apparently cannot be observed for this system. A transit is where the planet's orbit is aligned so that the planet passes between the star and Earth. Scientists have known for some time that Gliese-581 has four extrasolar planets. Those four objects (called b, c, d, and e) are not in dispute. They are easier to detect.

But the existence of planets f and g has come into question. Planets f and g are apparently in dispute and are now considered unconfirmed by astronomers. Planets f and g were based on very faint data that may simply be noise. These sizes of planets may be too small to detect, at least from ground based instruments on Earth. Subsequent to the initial reports that generated enthusiasm in the media, scientists were not able to confirm the detection of Gliese-581g. Though I generally accept evidence for the existence of planets around other stars, there are limits to what our science can do that make me skeptical on Gliese 581 f and g.

Perhaps someday better data can be obtained from a space-based instrument that will resolve the question. The news reports on Gliese 581g show that scientists are only human and both scientists and the media should be careful about reporting initial discoveries before they are confirmed. The scientific community has a tendency to engage in speculation, based on little information, to feed people's assumptions about life evolving on other planets.

To read articles written by Wayne on extrasolar planets, go to the list of [publications on planetary science](#).