

The Bible Vs Pliny the Elder Paper No. OCCG-040

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: The Bible as the inspired word of God is held up against the measure of perfection to determine whether it is to be trusted. This is a discussion as to how applicable that measure is, what to consider, and a comparison to a book contemporary to the New Testament which was not inspired by God.

KEY WORDS:

Bible, New Testament, Old Testament, prophecy, scientific statements, Pliny the Elder.

REPORT:

The Bible as the inspired word of God is held up against the measure of perfection to determine whether it is to be trusted. It is certainly reasonable for a God to produce a flawless book, but is that a reasonable measure for us to use at this time?

SITUATION

The church response is normally that it was perfect "in the original autograph" or when it was first written. Given that (1) it was written in a period from 1491 B.C. until 95 A.D. by approximately 40 authors ¹, (2) we have no original manuscripts but only copies of copies, and (3) God allowed it to be hidden from us for more than a thousand years, and (4) God allows man to translate it any way he chooses to (Consider the Queen James Bible) you are going to have to believe in the Bible for something other than absolute perfection

on one of today's translations.

PROOFS OF THE BIBLE:

The Bible demonstrates its authorship by:

- (1) **Harmony** of the theme and message of approximately 40 authors over a 1500 year period. No other writings even come close.
- (2) **Scientific Statements** which were not understood to be true at a later date. Items such as "paths of the seas", earth hangs on nothing, "singing of the stars", atoms, and atomic energy ².
- (3) **Prophecies**, including numerous regarding Jesus ³.
- (4) **Lack of contemporary myths** which you would expect with numerous authors writing.

DIS-PROOFS OF THE BIBLE

Concerted efforts have been made to discredit the Bible, with prophecies of its demise being an ongoing happening year after year. In spite of continuing attempts to disprove and predictions of its demise, the Bible remains the best seller in the world.

IS THAT CLOSE ENOUGH?

It is close enough to convince those who already believe, but as a practical matter it is not enough to prove it to those inclined not to believe. It will take a different proof to convince some.

ANTI-PROOF

Sometimes instead of looking at proof, it is good to look at the opposite. In this case consider what would a book look like if it

was not inspired by God.

We cannot tell this from a contemporary scientific book, as scientists believe everything they say (or at least so they say). To understand this look at the scientific books a hundred years ago. Today's scientists laugh at the misunderstandings they had a hundred years ago. In a hundred years, the new set of arrogant scientists will laugh at some of the beliefs of today. It is simply an ongoing process where we are not completely objective about our own beliefs. What we need is a book which was written contemporarily with the Bible. Turns out, such a book exists, at least one written contemporarily with the New Testament for a side by side comparison.

That book is **Natural History: A Selection by Pliny the Elder**. This is a 377 page book currently being printed by Penguin Books and is available on Amazon among other places. It appears to be one of 7 books written by Pliny the Elder who shows encyclopedic knowledge of the world around him. The book is nothing short of amazing in breath and detail. It is a book written by someone with tremendous access to contemporary knowledge, and he makes no claim to inspiration by any god.

What does the book of a highly intelligent contemporary of the apostles say?

Footnotes

- (1) www.thearray.org/the-christian-array/ The Christian Array Array / 07 Histories
- (2) www.thearray.org/the-christian-array/ The Christian Array Array / 07 Histories / 7.2
- (3) www.thearray.org/the-christian-array/ The Christian Array Array / 07 Histories / 7.3

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(1) **Harmony:** Harmony of authors and across generations is not a question as he is a single author at a single time.

(2) **Scientific Statements** There are no scientific statement type proofs.

(3) **Prophecies** There are no prophecies.

(4) **Lack of contemporary myths** This is a subject which can be addressed. The book is full of what he thought to be the truth which we can easily identify as being myths today. He makes many statements which God would have known to not be true, if he had been claiming inspiration of a god.

Pages 3-14 of this paper are direct quotations from the book to give an idea of his level of knowledge. This is not an exhaustive list, and we would encourage you to read the book for yourself.

CONCLUSION:

The Bible is clearly a book which has an inspiration beyond what you would expect from a man or a group of men to compile. In its present form, it is not perfect, but it is really close. By becoming a Hebrew and Greek scholar, you might come a little closer to actual perfection, but you are not going to get there.

Bottom line is this is what God has provided for us. We need to find the most accurate translation and follow it.

NATURAL HISTORY: A SELECTION

Pliny the Elder, AD 23-79

Wrote 7 books like this, this is the only one to survive.

Published by Penguin Books, first published 1991

“....” Means words are left out for brevity, but the meaning is retained.

(parenthesis) means an added comment.

BOLD AND UNDERLINED are his headings.

ASTRONOMY

- P. 11 “there being four elements...fire...air...earth...water”
- P. 11 “The seven stars, which we call planets...hang suspended between heaven and the earth by this same air and are separated by fixed intervals.”
- P. 11 “The sun, the ruler not only of the seasons and of the lands, but even of the stars themselves and the sky, moves in the midst of the planets; the sun is greatest in size and power.”
- P. 11 When we consider his functions we must believe that the sun is the soul, or, more intelligibly, the mind of the universe, the ruling principle and divinity of Nature. He blacks out and lights up the rest of the stars....He lends his light to the rest of the stars.”
- P. 15 “All other planets – among them the sun and moon – orbit in the opposite direction of the earth, that is, to the left, while the earth always moves to the right.”
- P, 15 “So the air does not become rolled up into a sluggish ball through revolving in the same direction as a result of the continuous rotation of the earth, but is scattered into separate parts by the head-on impact of the planets.”
- p. 15 “Below the sun revolves a large planet called Venus,”
- P. 16 (the Moon) “At one moment is low in the sky, at another time high – but not with any consistency.”
- P. 17 “The planets are, undoubtedly, nourished by water from the earth.”
- P. 19 “The majority of authorities, however, have said that clouds reach a height of 103 miles.”
- P. 19 “There are also stars of several kinds that suddenly come into being in the sky itself. The Greeks call them ‘comets’; we call them ‘long tailed stars,.....This phenomenon means strong winds, or heat.”

- P. 21 “Some believe that even comets go forever and in an orbit of their own, but are not visible except when deserted by the sun. Others, however, believe that they come into existence from waster that happens to be about and from thence the force of fire, and for the same reason are dissolved.”
- P. 23 “When these stars come singly they are heavy and sink ships, and, if they fall down into the bottom of the hold, they destroy them with fire.”
- P. 24 “- indeed it rains stones sometimes because they are carried aloft by the wind. So it is with many things.”
- P. 25 Whirlwinds “Sudden blasts, which, as has been stated, arise as a result of the earth breathing out and fall back again to the earth,”
- P. 25 Cyclones “The only remedy, and this is a slight one, is to pour out vinegar before its approach, this substance being naturally cold.”
- P. 27 “since knowledge has made such strides in the interpretation even of thunderbolts that it can foretell that others will come on a fixed day.”
- P. 28 Man is the one living thing that lightning does not invariably kill, the rest die instantly.... the eagle is the only bird that is not struck.”
- P. 29 “When Lucius Pallus and Gaius Marcellus were consuls it rained wool.....rained fired bricks”
- P. 31 **“The shape of the earth is the first fact about which there is general agreement. At any rate we call the earth a sphere....**
- P. 36 “I think there is no doubt that winds cause earthquakes. For earth tremors never occur unless the seal is calm and the sky is so motionless that birds cannot hover, because all the air which bears them up has been taken away.”
- P. 37 “There is also a sign in the sky, a cloud like linen thread stretches in fine weather over a wide are in advance of an impending earthquake....”
- P. 37 “...also a protection against earthquakes such as is often provided by caves for they let out the confined breath.”
- P. 30 Local Marvels “courtyard on which no rain falls.....town sacrifices that have been left do not decay.... A rough boulder which can be moved by one finger but resists a push made with the whole body.....some earth that heals all wounds....where stakes that are driven into the ground cannot be pulled out...”
- P. 41 “Experts in geometry interpret this to mean that the letter had been sent form the center of the earth....”

- P. 42 “The whole earth is split into three continents: Europe, Asia and Africa”
- P. 42 Regarding Europe “Most authorities consider, and rightly so, that it occupies a half, not a third, of the world.”
- P. 51 Pterophoros “It is believed that here are the hinges on which the world turns and the extreme limits of the circuits of the stars.”
- P. 58 Africa “The Strapfeet are people with feet like thongs who naturally move by crawling.”
- P. 59 “The Nile is the only river that does not give off vapors.”
- P. 65 “India comprises a third of the whole land surface of the world.”
- P. 70 Ethiopia “....races without noses and with completely flat faces; in some cases tribes have no upper lip, in others no tongue.”
- P. 71 Ethiopia “One group has no mouth and no nostrils these people breathe through a single hole and similarly suck in drink by means of an oat straw....”

ZOOLOGY

- P. 76 “....the Armaspi are said to live, a people noted for having one eye in the middle of their forehead.....the griffin is a type of wild beast with wings....which digs gold out of tunnels.”
- P. 76 “the Abarimon where forest dwellers live who have their feet turned behind their legs; they run with extraordinary speed....”
- P. 76 “Ophiogenes; they used to cure snake-bites by touchwhose saliva is an antidote to snake bites.”
- P. 77 “Pssylli....produce in their bodies a poison deadly to snakes and its odour puts snakes to sleep.”
- P. 77 “Yet all men have a poison that is effective against snakes: people say that snakes flee from saliva as though from boiling water, and that if it gets in their throats they die – and especially this is that case if the person is fasting.”
- P. 77 “Machlyes who are bisexual and assume the role of either sex turn and turn about.”
- P. 77 “Illyrians, who cast spells by a glance and kill hose they stare at for a longer time, especially if it is with a look of anger.....What is more noteworthy is that each eye has two pupils.”

- P. 78 “Gymnosophists, remain standing from sunrise to sunset in the burning sun, all the while looking at the sun with a fixed gaze....”
- P. 78 “Megasthenes.....with feet reversed and eight toes on each foot....men with dog’s heads....”
- P. 78 “....Monocoli who have only one leg and hop with amazing speed....called the Umbrella-footed, because when the weather is hot they lie on their back stretched out on the ground and protect themselves by the shade of their feet....further to the east of these are some people without necks and with eyes in their shoulders.”
- P. 79 “Astomi who have no mouth....live only on the air they breathe and the odour they draw in through their nostrils.”
- P. 79 “parts of India where there are no shadows”
- P. 80 “In the deserts of Africa ghosts suddenly confront the traveler and vanish in a flash.”
- P. 80 “- of Alcippe, who gave birth to an elephant, and of a serving-maid who gave birth to a snake.”
- P. 81 “That women have changed into men is not a myth.”
- P. 81 “In Africa, I myself saw someone who became a man on his wedding-day.”
- P. 85 “When an earthquake split open a mountain in Crete a body more than 70 feet tall was discovered.”
- P. 104 “....the Babylonians have astronomical observations inscribed on baked bricks for 730,000 years....”
- P. 116 “The lions great ferocity....Indeed all his strength is in his eyes...”
- P. 117 “The basilisk...destroys bushes not only by its touch but also by its breath, and it burn grass and splits rocks. It is believed that once one was killed with a spear by a man on horseback and its destructive power rose through the spear and killed the rider and his horse.”
- P. 119 “....hippopotamus....teacher in one branch of medicine....sees a sharp stalk....pierces a vein in its leg, and so, by losing blood, lightens its body, which would otherwise become ill.”
- P. 123 “....often an ox spoke....”
- P. 130 “The fastest of all animals, not only among creatures of the sea, is the dolphin”

- P. 135 “Pearls come from shells much like oyster shells. When stimulated by the season for procreation, they open up, as it were, and are impregnated with dew....For it is certain that pearls are conceived from the sky...” “In the event of lightning, the shells close up and the pearls shrink to a size corresponding to the oyster’s failure to take in food, But if it also thunders, the oysters take fright and close up so suddenly that they produce what are called ‘wind’ pearls which are inflated and have a light and empty form: these are the oysters miscarriages.” “Whenever a shell sees a hand, it closes up and hides its wealth since it knows that this is the object of the search.”
- P. 143 Cocks “They have a knowledge of the stars...”
- P. 144 “...a farm yard cock spoke at the country house of Galerius....”
- P. 147 Parrots “It is generally held that if they are defeated by the difficulty of a word, they die,....”
- P. 153 “Honey comes out of air and is chiefly formed in the time just before dawn,....”
- P. 160 “The leading experts state the eyes are connected to the brain by a vein. I am inclined to believe that they are also connected to the stomach. For it is an established fact that if a man has an eye knocked out he is invariably sick.?”
- P. 160 “The heart....This is the seat of the mind.”
- P. 160 “The Egyptians....believe that the human heart increases in size every year and that by the age of fifty reaches its maximum weight of about a quarter of an ounce, and, that from that time forward it loses weight at a consistent rate so that because of heart failure man does not live beyond a hundred years.” (It says a quarter of an ounce)
- P. 161 “When a forehead is large it denotes that the mind is sluggish....small forehead have an agile mind....a round forehead are irascible....large ears are a sign of one who talks too much and is silly.”

BOTANY

- P. 170 “The Cave-dwellers buy cinnamon from their neighbours and carry it across vast seas in ships that are neither steered by rudders, nor driven by oars, nor drawn by sails, nor assisted by any device.”
- P. 180 “....India told of some trees growing in the seal, whose leaves were green underwater but dried up in the sun as soon as they were taken out of the water and turned into salt.”

VINES AND VITICULTURE

P. 183 “a staircase made from a single vine...No other timber has a longer life,”

P. 191 “Spaces must also be left between jars to prevent anything like to affect the wine from passing from one to another....”

P. 191 **“Careful investigation reveals that no activity takes more of a man’s life than wine-making, as if Nature had not given us a perfectly healthy liquid to drink – namely water – of which all other animals avail themselves!”** (not a myth, just interesting)

THE OLIVE AND OTHER FRUIT-TREES

P. 199 Grafts “Nothing more can be devised....”

P. 203 Myrtle “a tree with remarkable power of prophecy and augury.”

P. 204 “Another possible reason that the laurel, alone of the shrubs used as an indoor plant by man, is never struck by lightning.” “...Emperor Tiberius used to put a laurel wreath on his head when there was thunder, to protect himself from the danger of lightning.”

FOREST TREES

P. 210 “yew...male berries are poisonous....rendered harmless if a copper nail is hammered into the tree.”

P. 211 “Trees, which are a gift of Nature, have three mode of growth: spontaneously, from seed, or from roots.”

P. 213 “In general the bodies of trees, like those of other living things, possess skin, blood, flesh, sinews, veins, bones and marrow.”

AGRICULTURE

P. 219 “Homer’s words re indeed very true, that there are always unhealthy mists rising from a river before dawn.”

DRUGS OBTAINED FROM GARDENS

- P. 224 “The diamond.... is destroyed by goat’s blood.”
- P. 224 “....cucumber...beneficial for the treatment of poor eyesight eye-diseases and styes on the eyelids.... Psoriasis and ringworm.”
- P. 225 “Onions...a cure for poor vision...ease the bowels by moving gas along, disperse haemorrhoids, early stages of dropsy.”
- P. 225 “Garlic is very potent and beneficial against ailments caused by changes of water and location.”
- P. 225 “Lettuces... check sexual appetite, cool a feverish body, purge the stomach and increase the volume of blood...suppress belches, and aid digestion...too much loosens the bowels....a moderate amount causes constipation.”
- P. 226 “...boiled cabbage prevents dreams and insomnia...” cabbage is the enemy of the vine...if taken in food beforehand, prevents intoxication. If taken afterwards it neutralizes the effect.”
- P. 226 “People in the sun do not suffer from heat exhaustion if they carry tow springs of pennyroyal behind their ears.”
- P. 226 “....white poppy....The seed cures leprosy.”
- P. 227 “....remedy...counteract the poison of venomous animals....2 denarii of wind thyme, and 2 denarii of opopanax and signal, 1 denarius of trefoil seed, of aniseed, of fennel-seeds, of ami, 6 denarii of vetch and 12 denarii of flour made from vetch that has been ground and sieved then kneed with the best wind into tablets each of 1 victoriatum in weight.”

THE VINE AND THE WALNUT

- P. 232 “....holding vinegar in the mouth wards off the effects of too ho a bath.”
- P. 232 “Vinegar check chronic coughs, catarrh of the throat, asthma, and shrinkage of the gums.”
- P. 233 “ Recently, however, a man bitten by an asp he has trodden on while carrying a skin of vinegar felt the would every time he put down the container, but otherwise it was as if he had never been bitten.”
- P. 233 “Vinegar poured onto rocks splits them when fire has been to no avail.”
- P. 233 “Vinegar....No other sauce seasons food so well or increases its flavour so much.”

- P. 233 “The more walnuts one eats, the easier it is to expel tapeworms. Very old walnuts cure gangrene, carbuncles, and bruises. The bark of walnut-trees cures ringworm and dysentery. The pounded leaves mixed with vinegar cure earache.”
- P. 233 “...a prescription...2 dried walnuts, 2 figs, and 20 leaves of rue...a pinch of salt... Anyone taking this on an empty stomach would be immune to all poison for the whole day.”

DRUGS OBTAINED FROM FOREST TREES

- P. 234 “Thus the oak-tree and the olive are at odds as a result of a long-lasting hatred...,”
- P. 234 “The hatred between cabbage and the vine is fatal.”
- P. 234 “Inanimate objects also – even the smallest – have their own particular poisons.”
- P. 235 “Ground acorns compounded with salted axle grease cure callouses that the Greeks call ‘malignant’”.
- P. 235 “The large juniper... provides a pitch...very useful for toothache. For the berry breaks the teeth and makes them fall out, thus relieving the pain.”
- P. 236 “Clusters of ivy-berries, either taken internally or applied locally, cure disorders of the spleen; for liver trouble, however they must be applied externally.”
- P. 236 “Ivy-juice....removes ugly scar tissue.”
- P. 237 “A holly-tree planted in a town or country house wards off magic.”
- P. 237 “....minyias, or corinthia,if the juice is poured on the grass and someone happens to walk on it....the person invariably dies.”
- P. 238 “the friendly plant....A band made of this and placed on the head relieves headaches.”

THE NATURE OF WILD PLANTS

- P. 243 “...if young girl’s breasts are rubbed with hemlock they will always be firm. If it is rubbed on men’s testicles at puberty it suppresses sexual desire.”
- P. 243 “If one draws a line round erigeron with an iron tool and digs it up and then touches a painful tooth with the plant three times, spitting after each touch, and finally replants it in its original spot so as to keep it alive. It is said that the tooth will never ache again.”

MORE PLANTS USED IN MEDICINE

- P. 248 If the sexual parts of a female are touched with aconite, death ensues on the same day.”
- P. 248 Aconite “But men have turned the plant to advantage of their health, having found by experiment that when given warm wine it counteracts scorpion-stings. Its nature is to kill a human being unless it finds something else in him to destroy.” (How would you like to be in that clinical study?)
- P. 249 “It has been shown that panthers are saved from death by tasting human feces.”

DRUGS OBTAINED FROM MAN; MAGIC AND SUPERSTITION

- P. 252 “...scraping sore gums with a tooth of a man who has met a violent death is extremely effective....a human gall bladder cures cataracts....pills from the skull of a hanged man to cure bites from rabid dogs.”
- P. 252 “Even today we believe that our Vestal Virgins can root runaway sales to the spot by a spell, provided that the slaves have not left Rome.”
- P. 253 “Indeed everyone fears being jinxed.
- P. 263 “Hence also walls are covered with prayers to ward off fires.”
- P. 263 “...Odysseus check the bleeding from his wounded thigh by a magic spell....Cato published one formula for setting dislocated limbs and Marcus another for gout.”
- P. 254 “It has also been observed that the guests at a banquet suddenly fall silent all at once only when the number of those present is even and that spell danger to the reputation of each of them.”
- P. 254 “Similarly, to cut hair on the seventeenth or twenty-ninth of the month is believed to prevent hair-loss and headaches.”
- P. 255 “Warts can be removed by those who, after the twentieth of the month, lie on their backs on a path, gazing upwards with their hands stretched over their heads, and rub the wart with whatever they have grasped.”
- P. 256 “People say that if one pares a corn when a star is falling, it is very quickly cured, and one can relieve a pain in the head by applying a poultice from vinegar poured over door-hinges. Similarly, a rope used by someone who has hanged himself relieves headaches if tied around the temples. A fish-bone lodged in the throat falls out if the feet are immersed in cold water.”
- P. 256 “Sexual intercourse cures pain in the lower regions, impaired vision, unsoundness of the mind and depression.”

- P. 256 “Shavings of ivory and Attic honey are said to remove dark spots on the face and ivory-dust removes whitlows.”
- P. 257 “Fresh blood from a bull is considered poisonous except at Aegira.”
- P. 258 “Bear-grease, mixed with ladanum and maidenhair, prevents baldness and cures mange and thin eyebrows,...Mixed with wine, bear-grease is a cure for dandruff.”
- P. 258 “As an aphrodisiac, Salpe bids one plunge an ass’s penis seven times in hot oil and then rub the appropriate with this.”
- P. 258 “If a horse casts his shoe, as often happens, and someone retrieves it and puts it aside, it is a cure for hiccoughs...”
- P. 259 “Horses burst if when being ridden, they follow the tracks of wolves.”

MAGIC

- P. 271 “the herb cynocephalia...was a source of divination and a protection against all black magic, but that if anyone completely uprooted it, he would immediately die.”

WATER

- P. 272 “...water suck up with itself shoals of fish and often stones as well, carrying more than its own weight aloft.”
- P. 273 “At Perpenna a spring turns to stone any land it irrigates....whatever rocks the stream reaches increase in size. At Eurymenae garlands thrown into a spring turn to stone. Bricks thrown into the river at Clossae are found to be of stone when retrieved.”
- P. 276 “lead pipes should be used” (for transporting water”
- P. 277 “Lake Cocanicus and another lake near Gela, but in these two cases only the water from the edges evaporates.”
- P. 277 “There are also mountains of natural salt such as at Oromenus in India, when it is cut out like blocks of stone from a quarry, and even replenishes itself.”

FISH AND AQUATIC CREATURES

- P. 279 “Yet even though all these forces may drive in the same direction, they are checked by a single goby, a very small creature. Gales may blow and storms rage but the fish controls their fury, restrains their tremendous force, and compels ships to stop.... a little fish that is 2 inches long.

P. 280 “They found a goby attached to the rudder and showed it to Gaius who was furious that such a thing had held him back and prevented 400 rowers from obeying his orders.”

P. 281 “...the tortoise....Its blood improved the eyesight and checks cataracts; it is an antidote for the poisons of all snakes, spiders, and similar creatures.”

P. 283 “the number of living creatures is known.”

GOLD AND SILVER

P. 302 “...lead....it heals when used in plasters and is especially effective in causing wounds to close over.”

P. 305 “.... Mirrors.... It is generally agreed that the phenomenon is due to the air bounding back and making contact with the eyes... Such a difference does it make whether the surface absorbs the air or reflects it.”

PAINTING, SCULPTURE AND ARCHITECTURE

p. 339 “Sulphur....and no other substance is more easily ignited....”

STONES, MINERALS, AND MONUMENTS

P. 345 “quarries on Paros, on one occasion when a single block was split with wedges, it was found to contain an image of Silenus.”

P. 359 “...Papius Fabianus, and outstanding natural scientist. He asserts that marble actually grows in quarries; quarrymen also say that gashes in the sides of mountains fill up spontaneously.”

P. 360 “Sarcophagus stone...Mucianus is the authority who asserts that mirrors, strigils, clothes and shoes buried with the corpses are also turned to stone.”

P. 364 “It is well established that plagues brought on by an eclipse of the sun can be relieved in many ways by lighting fires.”

P. 364 “Moreover, anthrax, a disease that recently caused the death of two ex-consuls, is cured by a mixture of oak-charcoal and honey.”