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ONE: A LOGICAL REASON

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# THE BIBLE CLAIMS TO BE GOD'S WORD

**T**he Bible is the Word of God because it *claims* to be the Word of God!"

"That," said my philosophy professor, "is a perfect example of circular reasoning. Christians simply assume the point they wish to prove!"

Yes, there it was. My professor had found a column in a newspaper written by a prominent Christian who argued that the Bible was the Word of God because its authors claimed to be divinely inspired. The professor then took a moment to insist that this was equivalent to saying, "I'm telling the truth because I'm telling you that I'm telling the truth!" The

implication was clear: the better we are able to think, the less likely we will be Christians!

Was my professor justified in his criticism? Of course, the bare statement “The Bible is the Word of God because it claims to be” is logically suspect. We all know how naive it is to be asked why we believed a stranger and then reply, “I know he was telling the truth because he told me he was!” We’ve all met people who expect us to accept their word without independent confirmation.

That said, let us not be too hasty in dismissing what the Bible has to say about itself. Let us suppose a foreigner would arrive on our shores and we would like to know something about his background, nationality, and history. We might call on a number of experts to investigate his clothing, others to study his facial features, and a third group knowledgeable about the history of rafting to make an informed guess regarding the age and origin of this man’s mode of transportation.

Assuming our guest could speak our language, would it be illogical to interview him? Certainly we would want to test what he had to say, checking for consistency, but should we not presume he is telling the truth unless there are reasons to believe otherwise?

In fact, there are some truths about people that we might never know unless they were to tell us. Years of independent study and analysis might never yield the kind of details that an individual might share in a few moments of conversation. Common courtesy means that we give a person a chance to tell his or her story. Just so, we must have enough respect for the Bible to “hear it out,” as the saying goes.

In a court of law the defendant is allowed to speak for himself. He is permitted to defend his integrity, to give reasons why his version of events is correct. He should have

more to say than simply, "I am innocent." He must be given the opportunity to show that his report is consistent, worthy of belief. Cross-examination should either confirm or deny his version of the story.

Just as a defendant might be telling the truth about himself, so the Bible might be telling the truth about itself. In the end you might choose to reject what it has to say about its origin, but if so, I hope you have the courage to face the implications. If you board the train of unbelief, you will have to take it all the way to its destination. More on that later.

Of course, we will also bring other witnesses to the courtroom. In subsequent chapters we will call history, prophecy, science, and Christ Himself to the witness stand. But we have every right to give the Bible a fair hearing and, as best we can, put it through a cross-examination.

We do not have to search for long to find what the Bible has to say about itself; the claims of divine origin are found on nearly every page. Let's examine a few. Then we will analyze what this means for you and me.

## IN THE BIBLE'S OWN WORDS

Perhaps you think, "Of course the Bible declares itself to be inspired by God; why even bother presenting the evidence?" But there are reasons why we must review these claims and their implications. Stay with me as we take a quick tour of some fascinating biblical terrain.

"All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16–17 *ESV*). This is one of the clearest and best-known statements in the Scriptures

about the origin of the Scriptures. The English word *inspiration*, with its prefix *in*, gives the impression that after the various books of the Bible were written, God breathed into them, so that they were “inspired.” But the Greek word means that God “*breathed out*” and the result was the Scriptures. In other words, *the Bible, metaphorically speaking, is the breath of God.*

In the Old Testament the “mouth of God” was regarded as the source from which the divine message came. “By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host” (Psalm 33:6). That expression, “breath of His mouth,” is the Hebrew equivalent of “God breathed.” God, the Creator, used men to write the Scriptures, but they are God speaking. The same mouth that spoke all of creation into existence is the mouth that spoke producing the Scriptures.

Inspiration does not just mean that God approved of their writings, but that men actually wrote His words. His ideas became their ideas, and they accurately recorded what He wanted us to know. Let us survey the Old and New Testaments to see if this is a fair statement of what the Bible claims.

## THE CLAIMS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

Let’s reread, as if for the first time, a few of the claims that the writers of the Old Testament have made. Look for the phrase “The Lord said” or its equivalent.

- “Then God spoke all these words, saying, ‘I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt,

out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself an idol” (Exodus 20:1–4).

- “Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet. You shall speak all that I command you, and your brother Aaron shall speak to Pharaoh that he let the sons of Israel go out of his land’” (Exodus 7:1–2).
- “He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord” (Deuteronomy 8:3).
- “Listen, O heavens, and hear, O earth; for the Lord speaks” (Isaiah 1:2).
- “The words of Jeremiah . . . to whom the word of the Lord came” (Jeremiah 1:1–2). Five more times in the first chapter of Jeremiah we read that the word of the Lord came to this prophet (vv. 4, 9, 11, 13).

Of course there are hundreds of instances where God is described as speaking. He talked with Adam and Eve both before and after the fall (Genesis 1:28–30; 3:9–19). Then there is God’s call to Abram (Genesis 12:1–3), followed by long conversations between him and God (for example, in Genesis 15:1–21; 17:1–21). We are all acquainted with the extensive dialogues between Moses and God at the burning bush (Exodus 3:1–4:23) and the revelations of God to His prophets. In each of these instances God is portrayed as communicating with people in actual spoken words, not simply through general ideas. Human language is never viewed as a

barrier in divine-human communication.

The distinguishing characteristic of a true prophet is that he does not speak his own words but the words of God (Deuteronomy 18:18–20). God says repeatedly, “I will put My words in his mouth.” This accounts for the fact that prophets often spoke for God in the first person!

Nathan, for example, could say to David, on God’s behalf, “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed. . . . I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom” (2 Samuel 7:10, 12). Similarly, other prophets claimed to speak God’s words in the first person (see, for example, 1 Kings 20:13; 2 Kings 17:13; 2 Chronicles 12:5).

Isaiah, too, was so overcome by his message that he lapsed into the first person, as though it were God Himself who was speaking. He began by telling the story of a vineyard owner who was disappointed that his best efforts did not produce grapes. Then, without further explanation, he launched into a speech given by the vineyard owner: “And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge between Me and My vineyard. What more was there to do for My vineyard that I have not done in it?” (Isaiah 5:3–4). Obviously, Isaiah was not the owner of the vineyard; he was just breaking forth with God’s message. He spoke on God’s behalf.

The prophets claimed incredible authority! Ponder the words of Samuel to Saul: “You have acted foolishly; you have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God, which He commanded you, for now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. But now your kingdom shall not endure” (1 Samuel 13:13–14). This judgment came to Saul because he did not obey the previous message

that had come through Samuel's lips. *To disobey what Samuel had said was to disobey God!*

There are other ways that the Bible affirms that the words of Scripture are the words of God. For example, David is the author of Psalm 2, which speaks about the heathen being in a rage and the nations being "in an uproar" (v. 1). Yet when the apostles quoted this psalm in a prayer, they ascribed David's words to God, "who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said" (Acts 4:25). When David was speaking, the Holy Spirit was speaking.

Finally, consider the descriptions of God's Word found in the Old Testament. Musing on the despair over the unfaithfulness of people, David declared, "The words of the Lord are *pure* words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, refined seven times" (Psalm 12:6, emphasis added). The Hebrew word *pure* means freedom from imperfections and impurities. This claim is made for speech that came from God to the prophet, but can be applied to all "Words of the Lord."

"As for God, His way is blameless; the word of the Lord is *tried*; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him" (Psalm 18:30, emphasis added). That word *tried* means flawless. The same thought is repeated in Psalm 119:140: "Your word is very pure, therefore Your servant loves it."

The Old Testament repeatedly claims to be the Word of God, and those words are therefore as enduring as God Himself: "Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). And again, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8).

If you call the authors of the Old Testament to the witness stand, they will affirm with one voice, "We are speaking the words that have been given to us by God."

The implications, as we shall see, are staggering.



## THE CLAIMS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

New Testament writers have the same ring of authority. They cited the Old Testament as the Word of God and put their own letters on the same level.

God spoke directly out of heaven at least three times during Christ's ministry on earth: at the baptism of Jesus, at the transfiguration, and even when Christ groaned in agony as He approached the crucifixion. Jesus, you remember, was troubled in spirit and prayed that He might be saved from the impending hour of trial (John 12:27). Yet, more important, He desired that the Father be glorified (v. 28). The heavens responded, "Then a voice came out of heaven: 'I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again'" (v. 28). Yes, God can speak, and does. The authors claimed that they were both recording and writing God's Word out of their own experience.

Paul, who authored at least thirteen books of the New Testament, claimed to have received revelations from God and wrote what he was told to say.

- "If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, let him recognize that the things which I write to you are the Lord's commandment. But if anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized" (1 Corinthians 14:37–38).
- "For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).
- "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep" (1 Thessalonians 4:15).

Peter made a direct link between the word that he was preaching and the unchangeable words of the Old Testament.

- “For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. For, ‘All flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’ And this is the word which was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:23–25; cf. Isaiah 40:6–8).

John claimed that the visions that comprise the book of Revelation are the words of the Lord and warned that if anyone added to these words, “God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18–19). For Paul, Peter, and John to have made such claims for what they wrote would have been sheer madness unless, of course, they were, in fact, speaking the words of God.

What if we were to systematically page through the Bible, listing all of the instances in which it claims to be of divine origin? Either directly or indirectly we would find some fifteen hundred statements that claim its divine origin. The sixty-six books speak with a consistent voice that these are the words of God.

Still, accusations fly of deception on the part of biblical authors, even if they don't stick: “Many of the claimed fulfilled prophecies in scriptures were actually made after the prophesized [sic] events took place,” writes one atheist professor, though he doesn't explain how the writers could

have pulled that off.<sup>1</sup>

To say that the writers were either deceived or lying just does not wash. If so, the Bible is surely the most fraudulent book that has ever been written! It would be a matter of incomprehensible irony that the very book that has inspired the highest standard of morality, the book that has given the world the most coherent worldview, the book that has given us a Christ who is admired even by skeptics—that this book is based on multiplied deceptions is beyond belief.

In effect, God signed every page of the Bible. We have every reason to believe that His signature was not forged. God has spoken and He has told us so.

## THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE

Joseph Smith claims to have received a message from an angel and thus the Book of Mormon came to be. But his claims are suspect for at least two reasons. First, the Book of Mormon has been shown to be hopelessly untrustworthy at every point of its history; not a single geographical site recorded has been discovered nor has any event in the book had independent confirmation. Second, there are no other prophets who claimed to have a revelation that was consistent with his. The Book of Mormon has but one author, a man who plagiarized much of his material and whose personal character is suspect. Subjected to the same kind of evaluation, Muhammad, the author of the Qur'an, would fare no better.

In contrast, the Bible is really a library of sixty-six books written by about forty different authors over a period that spans fifteen hundred years. If one of the most important characteristics of truth is consistency, we must ask, does the Bible present a unified story line? Since God's message

cannot contradict itself, we must investigate whether the sixty-six books each tell a separate story, or whether they present one story told in sixty-six different ways. In other words, if we were to put the Bible on the witness stand and scrutinize it for consistency, how would it fare?

*The Unity of Authorship*

Consistency is not the only test for truth, but it is one of the most important. Prosecuting attorneys tell us that a lie can seldom withstand close scrutiny. Under cross-examination the words of a witness will almost always either be confirmed or come unraveled. If the truth is not told, at some point it will simply not “add up.”

Obviously, a purely human book can also be consistent. A book on, say, physics, astronomy, or biology can be free of contradictions. Such books can present a unified view of the subject at hand. But the unity of the Bible is much more remarkable for the following reasons.

Consider:

- It evolved over a period of fifteen centuries, written in three different languages. During this period empires rose and fell and cultures came and went, but this did not affect the unity of the Bible. The intricacy of its message and history simply could not have been orchestrated by a man or a group of men.
- It was written by forty different human authors. These came from a variety of occupations: kings, fishermen, tax collectors, shepherds, prophets, and even a physician. In all it would be difficult to find a more diverse collection of writers. They run the gamut from Moses, who was highly educated, to Peter, who was a fisherman. Though

they wrote at different periods of world history, their writings dovetail with one another, not superficially, but intricately and brilliantly.

- The books were penned under different circumstances and in different countries and cultures, such as were in Asia, Africa, and Europe. Paul wrote from a dungeon in Rome, James wrote from Jerusalem, Moses from the Sinai, and Daniel from Babylon.
- The Bible discusses diverse theological matters, such as the nature of God and His purposes, the characteristics of both good and evil angels, and the nature of man and God's plan of redemption. It would be difficult enough to get ten men to agree on so much as one single theological issue, much less forty men agreeing on matters about which others can only speculate.

Imagine, say, a book on medicine written by forty different authors over a period of fifteen centuries. And yet, also imagine that the book is so up-to-date that it can still cure the sick today! Surely, we would have to admit that such agreement is remarkable. But the Bible treats subjects that are even more controversial and further removed from personal investigation. Yet it treats these matters with authority and unity.

Of course, in some instances the biblical writers had the opportunity of knowing what some of the previous authors had written. Malachi probably was acquainted with the other sacred books of the Old Testament. But Daniel might not have known what Ezekiel had written, and many of the prophets would not have known the message their contemporaries were giving. In the New Testament, Paul wrote independently of John; James did not know what Paul was writing.

If there had been collusion, if the writers would have consciously attempted to make their writings agree with others, there would have been a superficial unity and apparent inconsistencies would have been resolved. *The fact that the Bible has unity despite obvious differences in content, style, and perspective is a powerful witness to the independence of each author.*

### *The Unity of Theme*

The biblical writers selected what they wrote in light of the overall theme they intended to convey. The Bible is not a collection of books on many different topics; there is only one theme, and that is the topic of Christ and the redemption He provided.

The book of Genesis begins with creation, the fall of man, and God's plan to redeem at least a part of humanity from the effects of human rebellion. Thus we might say that the theme of the Bible can be stated in two words: *sin* and the *grace* of the coming Redeemer. Right after the fall, God promised, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Genesis 3:15). The entire Old Testament grows out of this initial prophecy.

Of course there are subthemes: the providence of God in His dealings with His people, the matter of suffering from God's viewpoint, and the origin and destination of Satan. But all of these are played out against the background of God's dealings with fallen humanity. The Bible does not have sixty-six stories to tell, but one story of God's response to man's rebellion.

Christ confirmed that the theme of the Bible was His

own coming. Engaged in controversy with the Jews, He said, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39 KJV). And again, “Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me” (v. 46 KJV). He frequently referred to Scripture as pointing to Himself. He indicted the nation for rejecting Him (Matthew 21:42–46; cf. Psalm 118:22–23). Luther was right when he said, “Christ is involved in the Scriptures as a body in its clothes.”

Walking with the disciples en route to Emmaus He said, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?” Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures” (Luke 24:25–27). Later He added, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, *that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled*” (v. 44, emphasis added).

The apostles saw Christ as the center of the Scriptures. At Pentecost, Peter used Psalm 16:8–11 and Psalm 110:1 as the basis of his proclamation of the risen Christ (Acts 2:25–36). And when Philip met the Ethiopian eunuch he “preached Jesus to him” (Acts 8:35).

From the earliest expression of the gospel in Genesis 3:15 until the “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” of Revelation 22:20 (NKJV), the Bible has an integrated story line. Like a garment woven with many different threads but all contributing to the shape of the whole, so the Bible has sixty-six books all contributing to one grand design.

The Reformers also saw Christ as the unifying theme of the Bible. Luther said, “All Scripture teaches nothing but the

cross.” Calvin affirmed, “Christ cannot be properly known in any other way than from the Scriptures.”

To quote Pascal, “Jesus Christ, whom the two testaments regard, the Old as its hope, the New as its model, and both as their center.”<sup>2</sup>

### *The Unity of Structure*

“The New is in the Old concealed; the Old is in the New Revealed” is a statement that is often heard. There are some 180 quotations from the Old Testament in the New Testament. This is in addition to references to Old Testament characters and events. The whole Old Testament points toward a future day when God will personally redeem fallen humanity. We cannot separate the two testaments without mutilating the whole. As Floyd Hamilton said, “In its structure the Bible is a unit, each part interlaced with and interpreted by the other parts, so that every part is necessary for a complete understanding of the whole.”<sup>3</sup>

This unity is achieved despite a diverse literary structure that includes “history, law (civil, criminal, ethical, ritual, sanitary), religious poetry, didactic treatises, lyric poetry, parable and allegory, biography, personal correspondence, personal memoirs and diaries, in addition to the distinctively Biblical types of prophecy and apocalyptic. . . . For all that there is a unity which binds the whole together.”<sup>4</sup>

This unity is so precise it defies human wisdom. For example, in Genesis 1:1 we read, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The word *God* is a *plural* noun; although the text teaches that there is only one God, the plural noun leaves room for a belief in the Trinity, which will be revealed later in the Scriptures.

And yet despite the unity there is also diversity. The



authors of Scripture are not just individually repeating the same things. They consider the great truths God has revealed, but from different standpoints. L. Gaussen said that the books of the Bible are like the instruments of a skilled musician, who takes up a funeral flute, the shepherd's pipe, or the trumpet that summons to battle. Just so, God chose, as it were, a variety of instruments that He inspired by the breath of His Spirit. Like an organist who can elicit both tears and cheers by using his or her skillful gifts, so God has communicated with different moods and different sounds. God communicated with the harmony and diversity of a symphony orchestra.<sup>5</sup>

The God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New. Liberal theories that teach that the God of the Old Testament is harsh and cruel, whereas the God of the New is loving and tolerant, simply do not hold up in the face of the unity of the Bible. Just read the warnings of Christ, or even better, read the descriptions of God's judgment in the book of Revelation. God has not changed His mind about homosexuality, adultery, or rebellion in general. In this age, judgment is not meted out directly, but rather stored up for future retribution. If you are unconvinced, just read 2 Thessalonians 1:6–9. It is unthinkable that the God of the Old Testament is less tolerant than the God of the New, for He is the Lord and does “not change” (see Malachi 3:6). The character of God in both Testaments is one and the same.

### *The Unity of Symbolism*

In the Old Testament fire is symbolic of purification and judgment; water is often symbolic of the Holy Spirit, as is oil. In both Testaments leaven is symbolic of evil. It was taken out of the Jewish homes in preparation for the Passover; and

Christ warned His disciples to be aware of the “leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (Matthew 16:6).

Or consider the relationship between the Old Testament book of Leviticus and the New Testament book of Hebrews; or the intimate relationship between Daniel and Revelation. Here the typography and symbolism display a fit that is as carefully crafted as a glove that fits the hand. Yet each later book goes much beyond its Old Testament counterpart.

Imagine various pieces of a cathedral arriving from different countries and cities, converging on a central location. In fact, imagine that investigation proves that forty different sculptors made contributions over a period of many centuries. Yet the pieces fit together to form a single magnificent structure. Would this not be proof that behind the project was a single mind, one designer who used His workmen to sculpt a well-conceived plan?

The Bible is that cathedral, assembled by one superintelligent architect.

## THE DECISION YOU CANNOT AVOID

The evidence presented in this chapter about the Bible's unity despite its diversity constitutes a *logical* reason why I believe the Bible is God's Word because I am forced to make a decision: *The Bible is either true, or it is a forgery; it is either a good book or an indescribably bad book; it is either the Word of God or the misleading, deceptive words of men.* Let us not fall into the illogical views of those liberals who say that the Bible is not the Word of God, but nevertheless is a helpful guide for the church to follow. It is either a fact or a fraud.

I can't say it more clearly: If the Bible is mistaken regarding its own origin, we have no reason to think it is reliable

about anything else. We do not have the luxury to pick and choose what we consider to be from God and what is not; and if the authors were writing their own ideas, not a single line should be taken seriously. If they were so deceived regarding the source of their ideas, they would have been deceived about the content of those ideas. If the Bible is wrong fifteen hundred times, it collapses like a house of cards.

There is no use trying to put a good face on this by saying, "The authors were essentially good men who believed they were speaking for God, but they were mistaken." If they so easily confused their own words with God's words, they were either deceivers or deceived. We have no way of knowing where their delusions end.

For years liberals have striven to make the Bible a purely human book. They have attempted to strip it of its miracles, to reinterpret its divine teachings so as to adapt it to the syncretism of our age. Pains have been made to remake Christ into a mere man, no matter how badly the text of the New Testament had to be mutilated. And yet they have wanted to believe that the Bible does contain at least some reliable information about God; they have treated Christ with admiration and have pointed to the cross as a demonstration of the love of God. They tell us that they want to treat the Bible with "reverence" rather than "slavish literalism." But if the Bible is wrong about its origin, reverence is woefully out of place.

Imagine a biography of Winston Churchill in which the author repeatedly says, "Churchill said to me . . ." Then we discover that the author had never met Churchill, much less had a conversation with him. Of what value would the book be? It would enlighten us more about the author's own delusions than it would about Churchill. We could hardly take

the book seriously.

Let those who reject the Bible as the Word of God do so if they wish, but they cannot have it both ways. If the claims to its origin are false, let us at least have the courage to admit it is fraudulent and loudly discredit it at every opportunity.

On the other hand, if the claims of the Bible are in fact true, it is obvious that it would be without error in the original manuscripts. If God is a God of truth, He must speak only that which is consistent with His character. It would be unthinkable to have an untruthful message from a truthful God. To say, as some do, that the Bible is authoritative in matters of theology but has errors in matters of history and science, is nonsense. (This is so important it will be developed more fully in the next chapter.)

Finally, if the Bible is true, at least some of the mysteries of our existence can be solved. For God has chosen to tell us truths about Himself we could discover in no other way. God has spoken, and we finally have some hope that we can push ahead with our knowledge of Him.

Let us open the shutters and let the sun shine in. "The unfolding of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:130).

## FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION

### *How Much Evidence Is Proof?*

Can we *prove* that the Bible is the Word of God? Throughout this book various reasons will be given to accept the Bible as the Word of God. But it is certainly possible that a skeptic who reads this book might remain unconvinced. He or she might be looking for a kind of "proof" that is unavailable.

First, we must keep in mind that there are very few things

in life that are proven in an absolute sense. We all know that  $2 + 2 = 4$  is a proposition that needs no proof because it is self-evident to the person who understands the meaning of the terms. But mathematics is about the only discipline in which we have such certainty.

Other kinds of knowledge are always dependent on observation and experience. When all of the evidence is in, we can say that we have “proved” a proposition, but even then there might be exceptions. Scientists who have studied thousands of snowflakes tell us that there are no two that are alike. We might say that they have “proved” that this is so. But of course, a moment’s reflection tells us that this proposition cannot be proved absolutely, because there could be exceptions. Think of the hundreds of billions of snowflakes that have never been compared to one another! At the end of the day, only an omniscient being who knows all things can say absolutely, “No two snowflakes are alike.”

When it comes to historical documents, the evidence is even more subject to interpretation and possible misidentification. The statement “Winston Churchill was prime minister of England” has substantially better verification than the statement “Julius Caesar ruled in Rome.” Obviously, the more recent an event and the more witnesses, the more credibility can be given to such accounts.

Arguments based on history can be discounted even in the face of highly reliable evidence. Questions about the credibility of the witnesses, the accuracy of their statements, and the trustworthiness of the copies of the manuscripts can always be raised. The simple fact is that arguments from history can never provide evidence that is “foolproof.” After all, history cannot be repeated. None of us was a witness to God’s creation of the heavens and the earth. Thus, there is

always room for competing theories.

In the case of the Bible, the question of “proof” becomes even more intriguing. Here is a book that not only speaks about matters of history and morals, but also pointedly reveals the subtle deceptions of the human heart. That is why *the most compelling reason I believe the Bible to be the Word of God is one that is available only to those who have a desire to submit to its authority*. To quote the words of Christ, “If any one is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself” (John 7:17). Without the *willing*, there cannot be the knowing.

The reason for this is not difficult to grasp: the Bible reveals doctrines that exist outside the realm of human observation. It analyzes our personal predicament and brings a conviction of sin that makes us uncomfortable. Indeed, Christ said that by nature we prefer spiritual darkness to spiritual light, and thus will hide from God’s revelation whenever it is convenient. Left to ourselves, we resist the Bible’s teachings and will believe as little of it as we possibly can, refusing to take the next step of faith.

Also, historical studies can only take us so far; faith must take us the rest of the way. Even if historical studies can marshal impressive evidence to show that Christ died on a Roman cross, historical investigation cannot verify that He “died for our sins” as Christians believe.

After a lecture I gave at a university defending the resurrection of Christ, a philosophy professor asked, “Even if I grant your argument that Christ arose from the dead, how does this prove that He was the Son of God, and a Savior?” He went on to suggest that Christ might have discovered a secret on how to make Himself alive, a secret that scientists might discover in the future. No matter how far-fetched

his rationale, this illustrates the difficulty of “proving” that the Bible is the Word of God. Such skeptics will not be convinced by this book, nor, I fear, by any other that seeks to defend the reasonableness of Christianity.

No matter how much evidence for the credibility of the Bible is accumulated, I must stress once more that Christ must still be received by faith. I do not mean blind faith, nor faith that is contrary to logic, but rather faith based on reasonable evidence. Yet it is faith nevertheless. If arguments for Christianity were absolute, no faith would be needed. All that we would have to do is point to the evidence, and reasonable people would *have* to believe.

Our own experience proves that we are slow to accept what the Bible has to say about us and our relationship with God. Indeed, not one of us can make the transition from doubt to faith on our own. Christ taught, and the rest of the New Testament confirms, that only by the power of God’s Spirit can such a transformation be brought about. “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:44), Christ taught. In other words, when we come to transfer our trust to Christ alone for our salvation, it is not merely by historical investigation, but by the action of God’s Spirit.

This is not to be interpreted as accepting modern subjectivism that says, “I know I’m right because I feel (or think) that I am, and no one can take my private beliefs from me!” We become convinced that the Bible is the Word of God, not by subjective hunches, but by having our subjective hunches destroyed when we are humbled in the presence of the God revealed on the pages of the Bible. We finally come to realize that this Book is telling the painful truth about ourselves and our relationships in the world. The pieces of life’s puzzle

suddenly come together and we are led to say, "Once I was blind but now I see."

The Bible is a mirror, not a photograph. A mirror shows us as we are; we can't add more hair, a bit of robust color, and with a slight of hand, remove all blemishes. No wonder the Bible frightens those who are unwilling to face their sins but is a balm to those who are finally prepared to own up to their need and accept the redemption of Christ.

A friend of mine who grew up in an atheistic home ventured into the New Age movement to satisfy his hunger and restlessness. From there it was into the occult and even embracing "white supremacy" as his compelling philosophy. But when he was exposed to the Bible, he wrote, "To my amazement, all of my flawed theories of white supremacy were no match for His loving Spirit, and I soon found myself unable to stomach the creeds that I once thought were self-evident. No one argued with me to prove me wrong. *Intellectual battlements were like puffs of smoke before His breath.*"

One of my prayer partners likes to tell the story of how he watched television preachers "just for laughs." He could not believe that there were people who actually believed in the creation of Adam and Eve and the virgin birth. But the more he listened, the more curious he became and the more anxious to read the Bible for himself. When the truth of his own sinfulness and need of a Savior dawned on him, he was converted. "After that," he said, "I realized that the God who saved me could certainly have created Adam and Eve and most assuredly could have had His Son born of a virgin." Once his heart was changed, his mind was changed.

Those skeptics who are open to the possibility that God has intervened in history, those men and women who have a desire to know the truth even if it challenges their



self-perception, might find this book a path to faith. By understanding the reasonableness of the Bible, they may be led to give it an honest hearing. They might find their curiosity stimulated, their appetites whetted, and their hearts turned toward Christ, the center of the biblical faith. The Spirit of God will use the Word of God to bring about a transformation that is the gateway to eternal life.

Those who are confronted with the growing conviction that the Christ of the Bible is the Son of God will find that their intellectual barriers will be overcome by an awareness that He is the “truth.” Historical and scientific matters that were previously a stumbling block in accepting the Bible will fall into place. Those who have discovered that the Bible is telling the truth about themselves are quite convinced it tells the truth about other matters also.

In sum, God uses the Bible to break through the natural barriers erected against its claims. The gift of enlightenment and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit enable men, women, and children to embrace Christ as their own. “In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures” (James 1:18).

Thus, this book is written with two prayers. First, that those who believe might understand the reasonableness of their faith. Evidence will be presented to show why critics who attack the Bible are wrongheaded. In short, we need to be able to defend the faith “once for all entrusted to God’s holy people” (Jude 1:3 NIV). Our faith is well placed, for the Bible can be trusted.

Second, I pray that the most radical skeptic who has dismissed the Bible as folklore will read these pages. Hopefully, these arguments will lead the skeptic to study the Scriptures

he or she has long since abandoned, and God will graciously grant the ability to know and believe that “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself” (2 Corinthians 5:19). If you are a skeptic, exposure to the Bible should be your first assignment.

Surely, no one ever spoke like Christ, who stands at the center of the Bible. These words alone are enough to make us ponder His incredible authority. “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” (Matthew 11:27).

Let's continue the journey.