

"Defend the Bible? I would just as soon defend a lion. Just turn the Bible loose. It will defend itself."

—Charles H. Spurgeon

30-May-14

The Bible's Claims About Itself

It is almost impossible for a Christian to have a meeting of minds with an atheist on any subject anywhere in the neighborhood of religion. As soon as the "conversation" moves to the source of the Christian's belief, the Bible, the atheist summarily rejects what the Christian says. In an incredulous voice, he will say something like, "You're telling me that you believe what you read in a book that is thousands of years old over the findings of modern science?" When the Christian answers, "Of course!" the atheist will ask, "Why?"

The only proper response is, "Because it is the Word of [God](#)," and the conversation can logically go no further. The determined atheist will accept no argument based on Scripture, and the faithful Christian will accept nothing that contradicts it. The conversation must end unresolved and unsatisfying—unless God Himself intervenes to open the atheist's mind or the unprepared Christian withers under the other's arguments.

In one sense, Christianity begins and ends with the Bible. All we truly know about God is found in its pages, as it is the only permanent record of God's revelation of Himself to mankind. In it, we find all of our instruction on

doctrine, law, and morality. It reveals the standards by which human beings can live in harmony. It shows the miserable depths of man's depravity and the incomparable heights of his potential—and how God can take him from the former to the latter. In reality, a converted Christian bases every aspect of life on the words written in it.

Billions have seen the need to own this book we call the Holy Bible. It continues year after year to be the world's bestselling book, and millions of free copies are distributed around the globe. One would think that, with the Bible so accessible, humanity's moral fiber would be strong, but just the opposite is true. What a paradox! A major key to successful and abundant life lies in our hands, yet most reject it as quaint, outmoded, and invalid for our times! The fact is, few people really study it, much less believe it. When polled, many give it lip-service, but increasingly, people do not consider it authoritative—it is just another possibility among many.

Accepting the Bible on [faith](#) may be noble, but God instructs us through the apostle Paul, "Test all things; hold fast what is good" ([I Thessalonians 5:21](#)). We must challenge the Bible to verify its claims, and conversely, we must take up the challenge to put its instructions to the test in our lives. We must make proving God's Word a personal matter that will forever erase all doubts about its validity. This takes time and work. It also takes the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit to open our minds to its richness and truth ([I Corinthians 2:6-16](#); [John 14:16-17](#), 26; [16:13-14](#)). Only then can we really understand and believe.

New Bible students are struck by the Bible's authoritative claims about itself. For instance, Paul writes in [II Timothy 3:16](#), "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The phrase "inspiration of God" is in Greek *theopneustos*, literally "God-breathed." Scripture, then, is a direct product of God's mind and being. The words "all Scripture" (*pasa graphe*) can be rendered "every text," "every scripture," "the whole scripture," "all the writings," etc., meaning the whole canon of Scripture. In other words, nothing crept into the Bible that God did not want there, and conversely, nothing He wanted to be in it has been left out.

This is backed up by [II Peter 1:21](#): ". . . for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

God employed His Spirit to inspire His servants, the prophets and apostles. At some point, they wrote down what God had revealed through them, passing His Word on to successive generations.

[Hebrews 1:1-2](#) informs us that God's inspiration occurred in a number of ways: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." God is not limited to revealing Himself in any one manner. Sometimes, He spoke directly (see [Genesis 12:7](#); [16:7](#); [Exodus 3:2](#); etc.). At other times, He spoke in visions and dreams (see [Isaiah 1:1](#); [Ezekiel 1:1](#); [Daniel 2:1](#), 19; [Acts 10:10](#); [Revelation 1:10](#); etc.). He once even spoke through a donkey ([Numbers 22:28](#))! On one occasion, He spoke through the casting of lots ([Acts 1:23-26](#)), much as He did through the Urim and Thummim to Israel ([Numbers 27:21](#)).

Most importantly, He spoke through His Son, [Jesus Christ](#), who came to reveal the Father (see [John 1:18](#); [14:7-11](#); [17:25-26](#)). He is uniquely qualified to speak for God because, as the apostle John describes Him in [John 1:1-2](#), 14, 17, He is God! As the Word (Greek *logos*), He is the Spokesman for God, communicating to humanity, and specifically to His people, the will of God and the way to live in a relationship with Him.

Since He came to reveal the Father, Jesus must have been the God Being that the Israelites worshipped in Old Testament times, who spoke to them and led them. In this vein, [John 1:3](#) specifically claims that the Word is also the Creator (see also [Colossians 1:16](#); [Ephesians 3:9](#)). The Being, then, who made all that exists is the same One who inspired the words of Scripture! Since we owe our existence to Him, we also owe obedience to His Word in our Bibles.

As for its content, the Bible claims that it provides truth to humanity. Jesus Himself says in His great prayer to His Father on the night He was arrested, "Your word is truth" ([John 17:17](#)). This an echo of [Psalm 119:160](#): "The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever." God considers every word He speaks or inspires to be true. It is His guarantee that we receive only the best instruction from Him. In fact, He would not be God if He spoke anything other than the truth ([Numbers 23:19](#); [Titus 1:2](#); [Hebrews 6:18](#)).

The Bible also claims, "Every word of God is pure" ([Proverbs 30:5](#)). David writes in [Psalm 12:6](#), "The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (see [Psalm 19:8](#); 199:140). The Hebrew word behind "pure" means "tested," "refined," or "proven of the highest quality." Our God has given us only the best information to propel us along the path to His Kingdom. We can take great confidence in that.

Jesus comments on the authority of Scripture in [Matthew 5:18](#): "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled." The jot (*iota*) and the tittle (*keraiá*, "little horn" or "point") are the smallest parts of written Hebrew. Christ was so sure of Scripture that He claimed that all of it would be fulfilled—down to the minutest parts. He affirms in [John 10:35](#) that "the Scripture cannot be broken," which means its authority cannot be "loosened," "unbound," "destroyed," "annulled," or "taken away." Our Lord and Savior says that no one can diminish the authority of God's Word!

The Bible presents many proofs of its validity and authority; what we have seen so far only scratches the surface. The most convincing and most lasting proof, however, resides in the relationship we build and foster with God. In a way, we can say that our proving of Scripture extends throughout our Christian lives as we [see God](#) in action, working in and through us to bring us into His Kingdom. The real proof is in the doing.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

[Forging the Canon](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Academic studies generally discard the authority of the Bible, preferring instead to focus on rubble and debris out of the ground. Can we have assurance that the 66 books comprising the canon of our Bible are authoritative scriptures? Neither the original apostolic church nor the Roman

Catholic Church authorized scripture, but accepted only what was already canonized. Almighty God, through His Holy Spirit, inspires scripture for profitability and usefulness in supporting doctrine, having secure internal protocols, rendering the documents tamper proof and not susceptible to private interpretation. Matthew, a well-qualified public servant, probably served as the recording secretary of the disciples, standardizing the authorized documents and screening out spurious documents emanating from heretical sources. The proto-Catholic fathers and the Eastern Syriac Orthodox fathers eventually accepted the 27 books of the New Testament as authentic. The Old Testament (consisting of the Law Prophets and Psalms) were already canonized by Jesus Christ (Luke 24:44). Canonicity (or the internal protocols) of the New Testament is established by (1) broad-based acceptance by the disciples or apostles of the church; (2) the protocol of first century composition (having been sealed during the lifetime of the apostles); (3) the authorship of the book has to be apostolic (or by a scribe under apostolic supervision); and (4) internal unity (conformity to the rule of faith). There is no valid reason to doubt the truth of the canonicity of scripture.

From the Archives: Featured Article

[Essays on Bible Study](#)

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Bible study is an essential tool for Christian growth, but sometimes people get off track in their studies. Richard Ritenbaugh provides a few guidelines in three essays originally written for the *CGG Weekly* newsletter:

'The Jewish Testament?'

'Prophecy's Place'

'Putting Out Flawed Study Practices'

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).
