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In Defense of...the Bible's Inspiration [Part I]

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Knowledge and truth are precious commodities. As a body of factual information and legitimate principles, knowledge is indispensable in human relationships. Truth, as knowledge justifiably believed, represents a fundamental reality that transcends both the provincial and the temporal. Most people are desirous of obtaining a certain amount of knowledge that they then can put to good use in their everyday lives. And, undoubtedly, most people prefer not be deceived, but instead prefer to be dealt with honestly and truthfully. One of the Ten Commandments, in fact, was based upon such a concept: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor" (Exodus 20:16).

Truthfulness always has been the basis for the moral, legal, and ethical codes of nations. And, an abiding respect for truth has undergirded the legitimacy of those codes. "Buy the truth, and sell it not," said the Proverbs writer (23:23). He who possesses correct knowledge has within him the potential to discern, and then act upon, truth. Knowledge frees from the shackles of ignorance; truth frees from the shackles of error. Indeed, knowledge and truth **are** precious commodities.

While almost anyone you ask will admit, **in theory**, that knowledge and truth are indispensable attributes of a sensible, everyday existence, **in practice** many people live out that daily existence as if knowledge and truth ultimately do not matter. Much of mankind lives according to an abstract, confusing, and largely inconsistent system of personal behavior. This is a bit odd, to say the least. In most matters, a man likely will insist upon complete **objectivity**. For example, in regard to his eating habits he might say, "I will not eat this food; it contains bacterial toxins that will kill me." In regard to matters of civil law, he might suggest, "That action is illegal; it violates my rights."

Yet when it comes to religion in general, and Christianity in particular, **subjectivity** rules the day. People can be so certain about their beliefs in the physical realm, but so nebulous about their beliefs in the spiritual realm. For example, on occasion when a person who believes in God is asked if God does, in fact, exist, he may opine: "I **believe** He exists," or "I **hope** He exists," or "I **think** He exists." But rarely do you hear him say boldly, "I **know** He exists." Or, if a Christian is asked the question, "Do you know you are saved?," the response may go something like this: "I believe that I am," or "I hope that I am," or "I think that I am." But rarely do you hear someone confidently assert, "Yes, I **know** that I am saved."

This is indeed a sad state of affairs. We now have progressed to the point where in matters as mundane as food choices or legal wrangling, objectivity is an absolute requirement. Meanwhile, in the much more important area of spiritual matters, we not only expect, but in many cases insist upon, a subjectivity that would not be tolerated in any other sphere of our lives. It is as if the pluralistic postmodernism that has affected secular society (the "I'm OK, you're OK" or "Who am I to judge?" concept) finally has made its way into the spiritual community as well. Apparently, some among us either once knew but long since have forgotten, or never understood in the first place, the proper concept of truth. Similarly, we either have forgotten, or no longer care, about the damage that an improper concept of truth can cause.

The time has come for Christians to embolden themselves once again with the same high regard for truth that Jesus expressed when He stated: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Christianity is no "I-hope-so-pie-in-the-sky-by-and-by" kind of religion based upon some esoteric, fairy-tale-like concept. Rather, it is rooted and grounded in the provable existence of the one true God, and the verifiable nature of the historical facts surrounding the life, death, and resurrection of His Son. When the apostle John wrote to comfort and reassure first-century Christians who found themselves in the midst of numerous trials and

persecutions, he said: "These things have I written unto you, that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13, emp. added). Thus, according to both Jesus and John, a person not only can know something, but he can know that he knows it.

There are certain undeniable, critically important implications standing behind this kind of firm and confident declaration. Consider the following. If a person cannot **know** (with certainty) that God exists, then he cannot know (with certainty) that the Bible is His inspired Word. If a person cannot know that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, then he cannot know that Jesus is God's Son, for the Bible provides the evidentiary basis for such a claim. If a person cannot know that Christ is God's Son, then he cannot know if he is saved. Yet John specifically stated: "These things have I written unto you, that ye may **know** that ye have eternal life."

The simple fact is—Christians are not agnostics! The agnostic suggests, "I **cannot know** whether God exists." Christians, on the other hand, **know** that God exists (cf. Psalm 46:10). Consider the alternative. Do Christians serve a God Who "may" or "may not" exist? Do Christians believe, and ask others to believe, the testimony of a Bible that "may" or "may not" be inspired? Do Christians trust, obey, and place their faith in a Christ Who "may" or "may not" be the Son of God? Hardly!

Even the casual reader will discern the close relationship among each of these vital issues. Knowledge of God's existence is foundational, which is why I have marshaled the evidence for it (Thompson, 1995a, 1995b). Knowledge of Christ's Sonship is pivotal, which is why I have documented the facts that attend it (Thompson, 1997). Knowledge of our salvation is essential, which is why I have assembled the testimony of Scripture that attests to it (Thompson, 1998a; 1998b). But no less important is the evidence that establishes the inspiration of God's Word—the topic to which I now wish to direct your attention.

THE NEED FOR REVELATION FROM GOD

With the existence of God established, it becomes reasonable to think that such a Creator-God would wish to communicate with His creation. Mankind shows evidence of high intelligence, kindness, goodness, justice, and many other unique characteristics. Since it is inconceivable that the Creator could be inferior to His creation in any fashion, and since the effect never is greater than the cause, it is inevitable that God would exhibit infinite intelligence, kindness, goodness, justice, etc. Therefore, some form of personal communication between the intelligent Creator and His intelligent creature would be expected. Else, how could mankind ever come to know, or appreciate, certain aspects of the Creator, or understand what the Creator might possibly require of the beings He had created? Furthermore, some form of revelation from the Creator would be needed in order to instruct mankind in certain areas, such as the following.

- **The Character of God.** While something of God's essence, power, and wisdom can be gleaned vaguely from the vastness and marvelous intricacies of the creation itself, a more concrete communication is needed to establish the exact nature of His character.
- **The Origin of Evil.** As mankind found itself adrift in a sea of evil, pain, and suffering, the question eventually would arise: Why? Man thus needed to be educated concerning the exact reason(s) for his predicament.
- **Mankind's Origin.** Without revelation to the contrary, men might come to the conclusion that they owe their ultimate origin to "accidental forces of nature," rather than to the omnipotence of a Divine Creator. The confusion of modern-day evolutionary theories is evidence aplenty of this.
- **Mankind's Purpose.** Man—left to his own devices—never could understand completely the ultimate purpose for his creation at the hand of an Almighty God. With no adequately defined role, and no immediate or future goals, he would wander aimlessly, from cradle to grave, in a sea of uncertainty.
- **Mankind's Destiny.** In the absence of divine revelation, man never would know with certainty anything about the existence of life beyond this one. He therefore might conclude incorrectly—as many have in every generation—that this life is all there is. The urgency of mankind having access to this knowledge is evinced

by the general despair of those who reject the concept of supernatural revelation.

A revelation from God might take almost any form. God could choose to communicate with His creation directly via word-of-mouth, through messengers (e.g., angels), or through dreams and visions. For that matter, He could choose any means that suited the occasion. Seemingly, however, the most appropriate medium for long-term results would be one that ensured permanence. That is to say, it would withstand the test of time and could be passed faithfully from generation to generation throughout human history. One possible way to accomplish such a goal would be to produce the revelation in a written form that could be duplicated and distributed as needed, thus benefiting the whole of mankind across the ages.

The question then becomes: Is there any evidence that mankind possesses such a revelation? And the answer to that question is: Yes, evidence does exist to establish the claim that God has given mankind His revelation in the written form known as the Bible. B.C. Goodpasture, the distinguished editor of the *Gospel Advocate* for almost forty years (1939-1977), wrote:

The nature and contents of the Bible are such that the rank and file of its readers in all generations have recognized God as its author. Man would not have written such a book, if he could; and could not, if he would. It moves on a superhuman plane in design, in nature, and in teaching. It caters not to worldly desire and ambition. It condemns much which men in the flesh highly prize, and commends much which they despise. Its thought are not the thoughts of men (1970, p. 54).

Harold Lindsell, former editor of *Christianity Today*, remarked:

Had God chosen not to reveal Himself, man could never have known Him. And man can never know more about God than God chooses to disclose.... Whatever knowledge of God is available exists solely because God has chosen to make it known. This is His self-revelation (1976, p. 28).

God's written revelation makes it clear that in the past He provided that "self-revelation" in a variety of ways. The Maker of the Universe manifested His presence in the works of His creative genius (Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:20-21). He spoke to various men and women in a direct, word-of-mouth fashion (Genesis 3:9-16; Numbers 12:8). He revealed Himself through visions and dreams (Genesis 20:3; Numbers 12:6; Isaiah 29:10-11; Ezekiel 1:3-4; Daniel 2:19; Amos 1:1). He addressed His creation through angels (Genesis 16:10-12; 18:13-14; 22:11ff.; 32:1-2; Acts 7:38). On unique occasions, He even made known His presence through such media as "a still, small voice" (1 Kings 19:12), the mouth of a donkey (Numbers 22:28), and a bright cloud (Matthew 17:5). God's greatest revelation of Himself, however, was in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ (John 3:16; 14:9; Colossians 2:9).

Lacking adequate revelation from God, we would have no accurate way of understanding what we needed to know regarding God, His Son, our place in the creation, and many other topics of ultimate importance to humanity. We would have no objective standard upon which to base ethics and morals. We would know little of the ministry and message of Jesus of Nazareth. We would have no information regarding the theological purpose of His crucifixion and resurrection—namely, that they were essential ingredients in God's plan to offer ruined man a way of escape from the devastating consequences of his sin (Matthew 20:28; 26:28). We would know nothing of how to enter that sacred body of saved souls, the church (Ephesians 5:23; 1 Corinthians 12:13), or how, once we had entered, to worship God correctly. Without God's revelation, we would know utterly nothing about these important spiritual matters that impact our eternal destiny. Truly, we should be grateful to God for providing us with a revelation that could be retained in a permanent form, studied faithfully, and used profitably by all of mankind.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE CONTAIN?

The fact that the Bible exists in the first place brings to mind the question: What does the Bible contain? It contains two things: (1) known facts; and (2) revelation. What is the difference in the two?

When we say that the Bible contains "known facts," we mean that it contains information known to the people of that time and place. For example, if the Bible mentions people known as Hittites (Exodus 23:28),

then historical records could verify their existence. If the Bible mentions that the Roman emperor, Caesar Augustus, commanded that a census be taken at a certain time (Luke 2:1), then we could set about corroborating the truthfulness of that statement.

But to say that the Bible “contains” known facts implies that it also contains something else. That “something else” is revelation. By definition, revelation designates the unveiling of facts and truths to man by God—facts and truths that man, on his own, otherwise could not have known. Revelation has reference to the communication of knowledge. [NOTE: There are two different types of revelation. **General** (or natural) revelation is the name designating the revelation that God has provided of Himself in nature (cf. Romans 1:20-21, Acts 14:17, Psalm 19:1, et al.). **Special** (or supernatural) revelation is the name designating the revelation that God has provided within the Bible.]

Compare and contrast the following. When Moses wrote in the Book of Numbers about Israel’s wilderness wanderings, he did not need revelation from God to do so. He was their leader during that period, and simply wrote what he observed as an eyewitness. When Luke penned the book in the New Testament that bears his name, he did not need revelation from God to do so. He acknowledged as much when he said: “It seemed good to me also, **having traced the course of all things accurately from the first**, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus” (Luke 1:3, emp. added). Luke had been on certain of the missionary journeys, and thus was able to write from firsthand experience.

On the other hand, notice Moses’ statement in Deuteronomy 29:29: “The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but **the things that are revealed** belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (emp. added). As an illustration of this fact, we may observe that Moses would have had absolutely no way to know the details of the creation week (Genesis 1:1ff.), unless God Himself had revealed those details to Moses. Nor could the apostle John have described to us in such a beautiful panorama the splendors of heaven (as he did within the book of Revelation), unless God first described to John the splendors of heaven.

On occasion, the various Bible writers could, and did, place into print what they saw, or what they had been told by credible witnesses. When they penned such matters, they had no need of revelation from God, since they wrote from firsthand experience. At times, however, they wrote about things they had neither experienced nor been told by others. When they did so, it was God’s revelation that provided them the information they needed (Amos 3:7; Daniel 2:28; Ephesians 3:3-5).

THE BIBLE’S CLAIMS FOR ITS INSPIRATION

Imagine, if you can, that somehow you could have access to every religious book that has ever been written. Imagine, further, that you could run those books through some sort of a sieve, to winnow out only those volumes that claim to be a creed book, by which you should pattern and live your life. That, admittedly, is a tough test—one, likely, that very few books could pass. Imagine further that you could take the books that passed this test, and run them through a second sieve. This time you would winnow out only those books that claim to be both a creed book to be used in regulating your life, **and inspired of God**. Interestingly, you could count that number on the fingers of a single hand!

The claim of inspiration at the hand of God is rare indeed. Sadly, misguided devotees of various religions clamor about, defending this book or that book as allegedly being “inspired of God,” when, in fact, the books themselves do not even make such a claim. So, the first question that should be asked of any volume for which inspiration is touted is this: Does the **book itself** claim to be inspired?

When it comes to the Bible, that question can be answered easily in the affirmative. In his second letter to his coworker, Timothy, Paul stated: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,

for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Peter wrote: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). When he wrote his first epistle to the Christians at Corinth, Paul reminded them:

But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words (1 Corinthians 2:12-13).

Furthermore, statements such as “God said...” or “these are the words of the Lord...” appear thousands of times in both the Old and New Testaments. Moses wrote in Exodus 20:1: “And God spake all these words....” The psalmist wrote in 119:89: “For ever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in heaven.” In Matthew 22:31, the Lord asked: “Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God?” In fact, “There are 2,700 such statements in the Old Testament alone, all of which make direct claim that the Bible is the Word of God” (Ridenour, 1967, p. 2).

When the Bible claims to be “inspired,” what is meant by that term? The English term, “inspiration,” derives from the Latin *inspirare*, which means “to breathe upon or into something.” The five English words, “given by inspiration of God,” in the King James Version of 1611 actually are translated from the single Greek adjective, *theopneustos*, which is derived from two Greek root words (*theos*—God, *pneo*—to blow or breathe). Theologically, “inspiration” is used for the condition of **being directly under divine influence**. Thus, Paul’s point was that every scripture is “God breathed.” [The word “scripture” in 2 Timothy 3:16 refers primarily to the Old Testament Scriptures. However, as the New Testament was written, it, too, was referred to as “scripture.” Peter, for example, referred to Paul’s epistles as authoritative and “scripture” (2 Peter 3:15-16). Thus, “all scripture” refers to both testaments.]

In addition, when Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:20-21 that “men spake from God, being **moved** by the Holy Spirit,” he employed the Greek word *pheromenoi*, which literally means “borne along.” His point was that the Bible writers did not speak from themselves, but were “borne along” by God’s Holy Spirit to write what they did. The Bible writers never credited their words to mere human reason. Both Old and New Testament passages bear this out. In 2 Samuel 23:2 it is written: “The Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, And his word was upon my tongue.” In Acts 1:16, Luke observed that “the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David.” Likely, however, the best explanatory passage regarding inspiration is Paul’s commentary in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13, wherein he affirmed that the information the Bible writers received came not from human wisdom, but directly from God. Further, that wisdom was not expressed in man’s choice of words, but via words guided by the Holy Spirit.

But exactly what **form** does inspiration take? In any discussion of the Bible’s inspiration, two words generally are used to amplify the meaning of the term: **verbal** and **plenary**. By “verbal,” it is meant that **every word** in the Bible is there because God permitted it by the direction of the Holy Spirit. By “plenary” (from the Latin, *plenus*—full), it is meant that **each and every part** of the Bible is inspired, with nothing having been omitted.

In other words, by employing what we today call verbal (word-for-word), plenary (full) inspiration, God ensured that the writings were correct and consistent with His will. This view holds that men wrote exactly what God wanted them to write, without errors or mistakes, yet with their own individual characteristics in evidence in their writings. While the various books of the Bible reflect the writers’ personalities as expressed in the human element that often is so evident (type of language used, fears expressed, prayers offered, etc.), it was only by verbal, plenary inspiration that God could convey, objectively and accurately, His Word to

mankind.

There is compelling evidence from within the Bible itself about the nature of its own inspiration. In the midst of Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees about their denial of the resurrection of the dead (Matthew 22:23-33), Jesus referred Exodus 3:6 wherein God said to Moses: "I **am** the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." When God spoke these words, Abraham had been dead some 400 years, yet He still said, "I **am** the God of Abraham." As Jesus correctly pointed out to the Sadducees, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). Thus, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must have been living. The only way they could be living was if their spirits continued to survive the death of their bodies. That kind of conscious existence implies a future resurrection of the body—the very point Christ was attempting to make. Of interest is the fact that His entire argument rested on the tense of the verb!

The same kind of reliance on a single word was expressed by Paul (as he referred to Genesis 22:18) in Galatians 3:16: "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy **seed**, which is Christ" (emp. added). The force of his argument rested on the number of the noun (singular, as opposed to plural). In John 8:58, Jesus said: "I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I **am**." He was attempting to impress upon the Jews His eternal nature, and to do so, He once again based His entire argument on the tense of the verb. This kind of evidence regarding the verbal inspiration of God's Word should not be overlooked.

We should note, however, that this inspiration process applied only to the original autographs of the sacred writings (i.e., the actual document as penned initially by the writer). While Bible writers were inspired, the scribes, translators, and others who followed were not. This does not mean, as some have suggested, that we do not have God's Word in an accurate form today. The text of the Bible we possess can be trusted, and counted as reliable. The modernistic idea which suggests that the copying process through the ages has destroyed the essence of inspiration is a "theological scarecrow to frighten those who are not knowledgeable of the art of transmission of the Bible" (Dickson, 1997, p. 319). The copying process through the centuries was so meticulous, and the number of extant manuscripts available for comparison is so large, that the minute variations which do occur are detected easily. Further, these variations are insignificant in nature, and do not affect points of doctrine. Timothy, from his early years, had known the Old Testament "sacred writings" that were able to make him "wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15). Interestingly, those "sacred writings" were mere copies of the original Old Testament manuscripts, but had been preserved so faithfully through the centuries that the apostle Paul could affirm that their original design—making men wise unto salvation—remained intact.

Several other points should be clarified as well. First, there is an important difference between revelation and inspiration. Revelation represents the revealing of facts and truths by God to humans. Inspiration is the process by which God guided the writing down of those facts and truths. "Revelation is the body of truth which God desired men to possess; inspiration is the way in which He gave this body of truth to men" (Woods, n.d., p. 6). The whole Bible is the result of inspiration, but not all inspired material was revelatory in nature. Paul could quote pagan poets in Acts 17:28 and Titus 1:12 because he already had access to this information, and did not need revelation to employ it. But God inspired him to record these sayings, and to record them accurately. Thus, whether the Bible writer used information already available to him, his own eyewitness accounts, or revelation from God, inspiration guaranteed that it was placed in print in the form in which God desired.

Second, the fact that a person wrote by inspiration does not mean that he was free from personal sin in his life. Israel's King David penned several Old Testament psalms. The apostle Peter acknowledged that "the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David" (Acts 1:16). Yet this was the same king who committed adultery with Bathsheba, and had her husband, Uriah the Hittite, slain to cover his own sin. Peter himself presented some extremely powerful sermons (e.g., Acts 2:14ff.), and penned two New Testament epistles. Yet

he played the hypocrite when he separated himself from the Gentiles to seek favor with the Jews, and received a public rebuke from Paul for it (Galatians 2:11ff.). Thus, while inspiration preserved the integrity of the writer's words as he was "moved by the Holy Spirit," that process did not diminish his freedom of choice or compel him to live a sinful life.

Third, inspiration was not a twenty-four-hour-a-day process. A few months prior to His death, the Lord informed His disciples that He would shortly enter Jerusalem, where He would suffer and eventually die. Peter, however, rebuked the Lord and said: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee" (Matthew 16:22). Obviously, that impetuous utterance was not inspired. In Luke, the story is told of how a group of Samaritans refused aid and comfort to the Lord (9:51ff.). James and John bitterly suggested that the Lord enjoin a "heavenly barbecue" to consume these ill-tempered Samaritans. Their attempt at vengeance—for which they drew the Lord's ire—hardly was inspired. The truth of the matter is that inspiration guided the writers in what they wrote and spoke from God as they were "borne along" by God's Spirit—a process that was not active every minute of every day.

Fourth, inspiration extended to a variety of disparate subjects. Today, it is not uncommon to hear liberal theologians, and those sympathetic with them, suggest that the "spiritual" sections of Scripture are inspired, but that all other portions dealing with matters of history, science, geography, medicine, and the like are not. This concept, known as the doctrine of "partial inspiration," is false. Were it true, everyone who reads the text would have the personal responsibility of wading through the biblical documents to decide which matters are "spiritual" (thus, inspired) and which are not (thus, uninspired). On some occasions, therefore, God would have "breathed" truth, while on others He would have "breathed" error. But the question must be asked: If God cannot handle correctly trivial matters (such as geographical directions, or the name of an individual), why would anyone think that they could trust Him with something as critically important as the safety of their eternal soul and expect Him to handle it in a more appropriate fashion? The psalmist stated: "The **sum** of thy word is truth; And **every one** of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever" (Psalm 119:160; emp. added). The concept of partial inspiration impugns the integrity of God, conflicts with the evidences for inspiration, and should be rejected.

Fifth, not only did the Bible writers view each others' works as inspired, but no Bible writer ever criticized another. Today, it is not at all unusual for one religious writer to take issue with another, even when they share the same religious views, or are members of the same religious group. But the Bible writers do not fall into that category—even when one might expect them to do so. For example, as mentioned above, Paul rebuked Peter publicly for his dissimulation (Galatians 2:11ff.). Yet Peter never avenged himself by denigrating Paul's writings. In fact, Peter wrote:

And account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the **other scriptures**, unto their own destruction (2 Peter 3:15-16, emp. added).

Note especially that Peter referred to Paul's writings as being classified by the same kind of inspiration as the "other scriptures." Additionally, in defending the right of elders to receive remuneration from the church treasury for their work, Paul quoted both Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7, classifying them both as "scripture" (1 Timothy 5:18). It is clear that the Bible writers considered each others' works to be inspired—a view we today would do well to entertain.

EVIDENCE FOR THE BIBLE'S INSPIRATION

Evidence to substantiate the Bible's claim for its own inspiration can be drawn from two general sources.

External evidences for inspiration include such things as historical documentation of biblical people, places, and events, or archaeological artifacts that corroborate biblical statements or circumstances. **Internal** evidences are part of the warp and woof of the actual biblical fabric itself. These are self-authenticating phenomena from within the Sacred Volume that bear singular testimony to the fact that the very existence of the Holy Scriptures cannot be explained in any other way except to acknowledge that they are the result of an overriding, superintending, guiding Mind.

Critics, of course, have objected to the use of the Bible as a witness to its own inspiration. Dickson has pointed out correctly, however, that

...this contention is really unjust. One does not have a right to deny the authenticity of a document without considering the document itself. We would not deny Shakespeare's authorship of the Shakespearean plays without first considering their text. The Bible should at least be treated as just another book. Nevertheless, even this right is rejected by the prejudiced minds of some (1997, p. 328).

When the evidences for the Bible's inspiration are allowed to speak for themselves, however, the story they tell is totally in accord with the Bible's claim of inspiration. Consider, for example, the following.

The Unity of the Bible

The Bible exhibits a unity that—on purely human terms—is utterly inexplicable. In order to appreciate that unity, one first must come to terms with how The Book was put together. The Bible was written by more than forty different men from practically every walk of life. Nehemiah was a royal cupbearer. Peter was a fisherman. Luke was a physician. Matthew was a tax collector. Solomon was a king. Moses was a shepherd. Paul was a tentmaker. Furthermore, these men wrote from almost every conceivable human condition. David wrote from heights of joy on the rolling, grassy hills of Judea. Paul wrote from pits of despair caused by Roman incarceration. They wrote in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek), from at least two continents (Europe and Asia), over a period of time that spanned sixteen centuries (approximately 1500 B.C. to approximately A.D. 100). And they covered topics as diverse as eschatology, soteriology, theology, psychology, geography, history, medicine, and many others.

All this being true, one might expect that so diverse a group of men, writing on so varied a group of subjects, over such a lengthy span of time, would have produced a book that would be a tangled mishmash of subjects more often than not marred by inconsistencies, errors, and incongruities. Yet this hardly is the case. In fact, quite the opposite is true. The Bible exhibits such astounding harmony, such consistent flow, and such unparalleled unity that it defies any purely naturalistic explanation. It is as if the Bible were a magnificent symphony orchestrated by a single Conductor. The “musicians” each may have played a different instrument, in a different place, at a different time. But when the talented Maestro combined the individual efforts, the end-result was a striking masterpiece.

Consider this analogy. Suppose you assembled forty contemporary scholars with the highest academic training possible in a single field of study (e.g., forty academicians with terminal Ph.D. degrees in world history). Suppose, further, that you placed them in a room, and asked them to write a twenty-page paper on a single topic—the causes of World War II. What kind of consensus would be exhibited when all of their treatises were completed? Likely, the forty scholars would be unable to agree on all but a few points; their compositions would be recognized more for the **disagreements** they contained than for the agreements. The Bible writers, by contrast, generally were not contemporaries. They worked independently, and the majority never even met another biblical writer. Most were not highly trained, and what training they did have certainly was not in the same field of study. Nor were they allowed to write on a single topic in which they already had an interest. Yet they produced a book that is unified from beginning to end. The books of 1 and 2

Chronicles and 1 and 2 Kings corroborate one another in numerous historical events. Joshua 1 verifies Deuteronomy 34. Judges 1:1 verifies Joshua 24:27-33. Jeremiah 52:31-34 verifies 2 Kings 25:25,27-30. Ezra 1 verifies 2 Chronicles 36:22-23. Daniel refers to Jeremiah (Daniel 9:2), and Ezekiel refers to Daniel (Ezekiel 28:3). And so on. This kind of unity, which is in evidence throughout the Sacred Volume, attests to the fact that there was a Superintending Intelligence behind it. So many writers, over so many years, covering so many themes, simply could not have been so harmonious by mere coincidence.

Each book of the Bible complements the others in a single unified **theme**. From Genesis to Revelation there is a marvelous unfolding of the general theme of man's fall from his holy estate, God's plan for his redemption (as carefully worked out across the centuries), the sinless life and atoning death of Jesus Christ, and the ultimate victory of the Christian system. In essence, the Bible is the story of one problem—sin—with one solution, Jesus Christ. In commenting on the Bible's remarkable unity of theme, Wayne Jackson has noted:

The redemptive thread that runs through the Scriptures is wonderfully illustrated by a comparison between Genesis and Revelation, the first and last books of the holy canon. In Genesis the origin of the heavens and Earth is revealed (1:1), while in Revelation the consummation of earthly affairs is effected, and the old order is replaced by a "new heaven and earth" (i.e., heaven itself), spiritual in nature.... Man, who was originally perfect, but who fell into sin (Genesis 3:6), is, by virtue of his obedience, granted the opportunity to become perfect again (Revelation 7:14; 22:14). All of this is made possible, of course, by the seed of woman (Genesis 3:15), the offspring of David (Revelation 22:16), who, as a consequence of his sacrifice (Genesis 4:4), became an enthroned Lamb (Revelation 21:4). Thus, the sorrow of Eden (Genesis 3:16) will be transformed into the joy of heaven (Revelation 21:4), and that tree of life, from which our early parents were separated (Genesis 3:22-24), will be our glad possession once more (Revelation 22:14) [1991, 11:1].

Each book of the Bible complements the others in a single, unified **plan**. In Genesis, there is the record of humanity's pristine origin and covenant relationship with God, followed by its tragic fall into a sinful state. But, a specific family line (the Hebrew nation) was selected to provide a remedy for this disaster (Genesis 12:1ff.; 22:18). Man needed to learn precisely what sin is, thus the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy document the giving of the law of God to Moses. Via a set of ordinances, sin would be defined and humanity would be illuminated regarding the price of rebellion against God (Romans 7:7,13; Galatians 3:19). The historical books of the Old Testament revealed mankind's inability to keep perfectly God's law system (Galatians 3:10), and therefore underscored the need for a Justifier—Someone to do for man what he could not do for himself. The prophets of the Old Testament heralded the arrival of that Savior (Luke 24:44); more than 300 prophecies focus on the promised Messiah.

After four silent centuries (the "inter-biblical era"), four Gospel writers described in great detail the arrival, and life's-work, of the Justifier—Jesus of Nazareth. The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are carefully crafted accounts of the birth, life, death, and ultimate resurrection of the Son of God (John 20:30-31). Each emphasized different parts of Christ's ministry in order to relate the "good news" to Jews or Gentiles. Matthew directed his record primarily to the Jewish nation. Mark stressed the works of Jesus. Luke, being the only Gentile writer of a Bible book (except possibly the author of Job), wrote to Gentiles. John's primary purpose in writing was to produce faith.

The book of Acts was written to convey the means by which mankind was to appropriate God's saving grace. It is a historical record that instructs a person on how to become a Christian. It also teaches about how the church of Christ was established in Jerusalem, and how that same church flourished throughout the Roman Empire of the first century. The various epistles that follow the book of Acts in the English Bible were directions to individuals and churches on how to obtain, and maintain, spiritual maturity. Finally, the book of

Revelation predicted (in symbolic fashion) the ultimate triumph of good over evil—acknowledging that Christians would win, and Satan would lose. To the careful reader, the unity of both theme and plan in the Bible are apparent.

[\[to be continued\]](#)

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