

DID GOD WRITE
THE BIBLE?

DAN HAYDEN

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Did God Write the Bible?

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INTRODUCTION

The Archaic Book with a Relevant Message

The tourist industry of Central Florida caters to aspiring young adults looking for career opportunities in everything from hotel and restaurant management to leadership roles in the theme park industry. As a recent graduate from Florida State University, Trevor fit in well as a metrosexual graphic artist with his penchant for shopping, gourmet foods, and condo living.

His concept of reality oozed with a relativism that could be traced to favorite professors at the university. He enjoyed the anticipation that tomorrow he might think differently about a lot of things. The possibilities of change excited his artistic temperament.

Because traditional values hung as fading clouds over the urban landscape, Trevor's opinion of religion fell into the category of philosophical speculation. Currently the novel ideas of Scientology intrigued him. After all, several movie stars were singing its praises.

"How do you know that the book you're reading is anything more than a collection of ancient writings?" he asked, pointing to the Bible. "I've heard that it's filled with contradictions, and it certainly isn't relevant to life in the twenty-first century. I don't know why you Christians keep referring to it as though it has some sort of authority. I'm not impressed, and I don't think anybody else is either."

Trevor's reaction to the Bible has become the common response of the postmodern culture. Like Trevor, postmoderns know very little about the Bible; yet they are convinced that it holds no meaning for them. In their opinion the Bible should be left on the shelf in some museum to be studied by antiquarians.

The fact of the matter is, however, that millions of people living on every continent still hold the Bible in high esteem. This includes people with doctoral degrees in every conceivable field as well as common people in every walk of life. Acceptance of the Bible has transcended social barriers of race, economic status, age, and gender.

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Those who respond positively claim that the Bible remains relevant because it's not a book about technology or culture (which change with time), but a book dealing with the human soul (which has not changed since the inception of time). What's more, thousands of contemporary testimonies proclaim how this Book has led to deep personal transformation. All of this suggests that in spite of the negative criticism of some, the Bible is indeed relevant today—a significant book for our times.

Why is the Bible, a combination of Jewish and Christian writings collected before the end of the first century A.D., still a topic of conversation? Actually, it is the most copied, published, translated, and revered book in the history of the world. President Herbert Hoover even said, "The whole of the inspiration of our civilization springs from the teachings of Christ and the lessons of the Prophets. To read the Bible for these fundamentals is a necessity of American life."¹ So to what can we attribute its enduring popularity?

Many have discovered that the Bible is a book like no other. Yes, it has a front and back cover, spine, and pages like any other book; yet it claims that God is its ultimate author. Other religions, of course, make the claim of having writings from their gods, but none can match the worldwide impact of the Bible. The Bible has roots that go further back than any other religious document, except for the Hindu Vedas, and it has spawned the most prominent religion in the world—Christianity. (Islam is second, and Hinduism is third.)

Any attempt to understand human history and the thoughts that have shaped our world must include a study of the Bible, the most significant literary document ever written. What does it say, and to what can we attribute its incredible influence?

Unfortunately, our contemporary culture demonstrates an appalling ignorance of the Bible, and that includes many professing Christians. Maybe you've picked up this book because you have unanswered questions.

If so, I've written this book for you. Many legitimate questions concerning the nature and content of the Bible are asked by those who have little knowledge of its content or who are skeptical of its value. My purpose, therefore, is to answer those questions and to probe those curiosities honestly and forthrightly. I'm not suggesting that the material in these pages is sufficient to a full understanding of the Bible, for nothing can supplant the

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reading of the Bible itself. Rather, it's my hope that *this* book will serve as an enticement to read *the* Book, resulting in a greater appreciation for the Bible and what it says.

Many other books have been written from a Christian perspective in defense of the Bible as Holy Scripture. But here I ask the hard questions and attempt to answer them as if we were having a personal discussion. I walk through the issues—not merely assuming a point that has to be proved. After all, if there is such a thing as truth, it ought to withstand any scrutiny. And if indeed the Bible is “*the Truth*,” as it claims, our sincere questions and close examination can only validate its claim.

So let's begin. We're embarking on a journey that takes us back more than three thousand years and travels through many cultures and geographical destinations. It's a fascinating story of how one book developed by laying claim to being the voice of God in the world. But let's start at the end of our tale. Our first question spans the world over the ages: What impact has the Bible had on people and culture throughout history—and even today?

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What impact has the Bible had on people throughout history—and even today?

If the impact of the Bible on the world were measured like an earthquake on the Richter scale, it would approach the maximum magnitude of 10. The Bible has in fact had a global influence spanning two millennia of world history, and its effect on Western civilization in particular has been enormous. Consider a contemporary event in England.

In 1994 the British Library purchased a copy of the New Testament from Bristol Baptist College for £1 million (about \$1,650,000). This 1526 New Testament, translated by William Tyndale and printed in the city of Worms, was the only complete copy (lacking only the title page) known to exist of the first New Testament printed in the English language. One other partial copy, lacking about 140 pages, was at St. Paul's Cathedral in London.

When asked to justify spending that much money on one copy of the New Testament, the British Library official noted that neither the history nor the character of the British people could be understood apart from that book. The value of the Bible in the social structure of England was reflected in what the British Library was willing to pay for a single copy of it.

Beyond Conformity

I have never been sucked into a vortex of swirling water, but I've occasionally dreamt of spinning around in the powerful undertow of a whirlpool. Maybe it was childhood memories of watching the water cycle down the bathtub drain and wondering if that could happen to me. Or maybe it was remembering the sight of a real whirlpool from the elevated safety of a tram. *What if I got caught in its irresistible grasp?* For whatever reason, succumbing to a force beyond my control has periodically haunted my sleep.

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And then it happened. Unexpectedly I was drawn to where I had not wanted to be. My mind swirled in the powerful grip of an unseen force, and I could not resist. But to my surprise I did not find it troubling. The pleasure of getting sucked in was actually quite wonderful. My life has never been the same since. I had been captured by Christ through the reading of the Bible.

That is how I would describe my conversion experience. I was not badgered into believing or tricked into trusting. No outside pressure. No imposed guilt trip or threats of eternal damnation. Not even the pressure to conform. Just me and the Bible—and suddenly believing was the most natural thing in the world.

As a young child, I conformed to my Christian upbringing. Who wouldn't in the same situation? A loving home, godly parents, a supportive environment—all the right ingredients to perpetuate family values and a religious heritage.

Isn't that why most people hold to their religious tradition? It's how a child is raised, people say. Religion is as much about culture as it is devotion to a deity. To deny a religious heritage is to turn your back on one's family. Kids raised in Christianity feel that pressure. So do Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists.

Yet as I grew into adolescence, I bucked the pressure to conform. It's not that I threw off Christianity to adopt something else. I just didn't want to be religious, because I failed to see any practical relevance to the real issues of my heart: athletics and music.

I tolerated church, but my preferred life revolved around school and my friends. I played football, ran track, and played trumpet in the concert band—all pleasant memories.

As I think back, though, I realize that my parents never attended any of those activities. I knew without a doubt that they loved me, but because they were too busy with church to get involved with what was important to me, I assumed a disconnect between the two worlds. I concluded that life was either/or. I could either choose to have fun or opt for church and religion. I chose fun, and Christianity became meaningless.

As I neared graduation from Hempstead High on Long Island, I set my sights on Cornell University, the premier school for veterinary medicine (my interest at the time). Playing football in the Ivy League also captured my imagination. But Dad realized my motives were less than desirable.

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Knowing that the school was considered a “party school,” and sensing that having fun was high on my list, he became concerned (and rightly so!).

Dad offered, and I accepted, a compromise: If I attended a Christian school for one year, he would pay full tuition. Then, if I still chose, I could transfer to Cornell.

Soon I enrolled at Wheaton College in suburban Chicago and jumped into a full schedule of classes, football, track, and band. I knew how to play the Christian game; so without protest I attended the daily chapels and took the mandatory religion classes. When concert band conflicted with football, I checked out the symphony orchestra and discovered they were desperate for a string bass player: free lessons for any takers. I signed on and soon qualified for the orchestra, which gave me access to the school’s string basses—a privilege I began to abuse.

“How would you like to play bass in our jazz quintet?” Steve offered one day as we walked across campus.

The invitation opened a door to a dream come true. Eddie was phenomenal on the piano, and Steve played a mean clarinet. Both were innovative musicians and arrangers. Wayne played decent trumpet, while Hershel could out-drum the best. I was the weak link, but plucking soon became as natural as bowing. I jumped into their jazz ensemble—some of the best fun I ever had.

One minor problem loomed on the horizon. We were not a school-sanctioned group. In fact, some of our gigs were cocktail parties—an activity frowned upon by the administration. Each time I checked the string bass out of the conservatory and rushed off to the next party, I knew that I was in violation of school rules. But I really didn’t care.

Then one night in my junior year (no, I didn’t transfer to Cornell) we played a party at a professor’s house. No kidding. As the liquor flowed and guests grooved to our music, I saw the hypocrisy of the moment. This professor was thumbing his nose at the school’s standards, and our band was part of the rebellion. Feeling sick of the whole thing, including my part, I left the party early.

Alone in my room, I paced—agitated, confused, randomly picking at things. *What is wrong with me?* Eventually my eyes landed on a Bible on my roommate’s desk. I flipped it open and began reading aimlessly. Verse after verse pricked my heart with a sense of contrastive reality to what I had just

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experienced at the professor's house. Everything about the party seemed false and degrading, while the Bible felt so real, honest, even uplifting.

That night it dawned on me that religion was not the answer. It was Christ. I had witnessed the Christian religion at its best and worst—and it had held no attraction for me. But in the privacy of a small room a whole new perspective flooded my mind. The Bible was not hitting me over the head with requirements of religion. It was inviting me into a personal relationship with a loving Savior.

Alone, and devoid of any church surroundings, the truth of the Bible seemed irresistible as I read and read for hours. Then I went outside to walk and wrestle with what I had read. At 2 A.M. I knelt down by a bench in the town park and reached out to Jesus as my Savior. Tears flowed as I confessed my sin and repented of my arrogant disrespect for spiritual things. I sobbed and laughed at the same time as God drew me into the whirlpool of divine affection.

As I walked out of the park, I knew I was a different person. It was no longer about religion; it was about a loving relationship with an amazing Savior. I walked home with Jesus that night and never looked back. I had discovered that the Bible is indeed God's Word and in the process had gone beyond conformity to step into a whole new realm of reality. The Bible's impact upon my life since then has been nothing less than profound.

Does the Bible contain a spiritual power that can dramatically impact life? Absolutely. From the moment of my conversion in the park to this day, I have experienced a consuming passion for the Bible. Now, after forty-five years of carefully examining this Book, I remain more convinced than ever of its wonder and magnetism. It is the Word of God—of that I am certain.

Turning the Tables

I tell my personal story of the Bible's impact to illustrate that not all who believe in the Bible as a divine book do so out of conformity to Christian culture and tradition. Yet I can hear someone say, *Christianity did have an influence on your early years, however, and it was just a matter of time before you would acquiesce to your heritage. You were undoubtedly predisposed to the circumstances of that special night of repentance and faith. It's all very interesting, but I'd be more impressed if a true secular atheist with no Christian background had a similar experience.*

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I understand. So let me tell another story.

Lee Strobel spent years in courtrooms and attorneys' offices. Receiving a Master of Studies in law from Yale Law School, he turned to journalism, becoming an award-winning legal editor for the *Chicago Tribune*.

Reflecting on his life experiences, Lee admitted, "For much of my life I was a skeptic. In fact, I considered myself an atheist. To me, there was far too much evidence that God was merely a product of wishful thinking, of ancient mythology, of primitive superstition."¹

Then in the autumn of 1979 his wife Leslie stunned him with the announcement that she had become a Christian. "I rolled my eyes," he said, "and braced for the worst, feeling like the victim of a bait-and-switch scam. I had married one Leslie—the fun Leslie, the carefree Leslie, the risk-taking Leslie—and now I feared she was going to turn into some sort of sexually repressed prude who would trade our upwardly mobile lifestyle for all-night prayer vigils and volunteer work in grimy soup kitchens." Leslie did experience changes in her life, but not as Lee had expected. Instead of becoming a religious oddity, she was transforming into a more caring woman of admirable character and integrity. It intrigued him. So he "launched an all-out investigation into the facts surrounding the case for Christianity" and for the first time in his life "picked apart the Bible verse by verse."

I plunged into the case with more vigor than with any story I had ever pursued. I applied the training I had received at Yale Law School as well as my experience as legal affairs editor of the *Chicago Tribune*. And over time the evidence of the world—of history, of science, of philosophy, of psychology—began to point toward the unthinkable.²

Refuting Christianity was Lee's clear objective. He desperately wanted to prove it wrong. Yet the evidence was compelling. Instead of the Bible wilting in the light of careful and professional scrutiny, it rose out of the dust of history as a powerful and amazing Titan. Awed by what he found, Lee found himself ultimately led by the evidence to reluctantly affirm the Bible's teaching concerning Jesus.

One Sunday, November 8, 1981, Lee Strobel locked himself in his home office and "spent the afternoon replaying the spiritual journey [he] had been traveling for twenty-one months." The biblical and historical evidence that Jesus was indeed the Son of God struck him. Reminiscing on his

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antagonistic research, he admitted, “I found myself chuckling at how the tables had been turned.”³ Trained in journalism and law, Lee understood he had to follow the facts where they led. In the quietness of his home office, Lee bowed his head and received Jesus Christ into his life.

Years later, in 1998, Lee wrote a book in which he laid out the evidence that had brought him to faith in Christ. In the conclusion of *The Case for Christ: A Journalist’s Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*, he said, “Looking back nearly two decades, I can see with clarity that the day I personally made a decision in the case for Christ was nothing less than the pivotal event of my entire life.”⁴

Lee Strobel had not been raised with a Christian heritage conditioned by years of exposure to the Bible. He probed Christianity as an outsider to the faith, not as a rebel from within. In his attempt to prove his wife wrong, he nevertheless found himself irresistibly drawn to the wonder of Christ through the record of the biblical Gospels. As an adult atheist with an impressive career in legal journalism, his scrutiny of the Bible led him to embrace the truth it taught.

The similarity of Lee’s experience with my own is that both of us were alone with our Bibles—not in a church service or evangelistic crusade—when the impact of the truth of God’s Word captured each of our lives.

The Bible is like that. It doesn’t need the help of preachers or evangelists (although they certainly have their place). One needs simply to read it. As Charles Spurgeon once said, “The Bible is like a lion.” It doesn’t need to be defended. “Just turn it loose.”

Just Read It

Why am I stressing the impact of the Bible, independent of its association with the broad spectrum of ministries that are often associated with the “Christian religion”? Simply because Christianity was never meant to be a religion, but a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ, manifest through the corporate fellowship of believers. Religion, on the other hand, as defined by man’s attempt to please God, is really the antithesis of true Christianity. Christ, through His Word, is a powerful, life-changing force. But religion, even in the guise of Christianity, is a powerless substitute. The difference is crucial. The power to change individual lives and entire cultures does not lie in the Christian religion. The power is in the person of Jesus Christ and

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the authority of His Word. So, if you want to know the real thing, read the Bible for what it says. Just read it.

The Gideons, members of a nondenominational Christian ministry by that name, understand this. The Gideons have dedicated themselves to the singular task of distributing copies of the Bible throughout the world. Gideons are laymen, not clergymen. In fact, pastors and professional ministers cannot become Gideons (because part of the Gideon vision is to let the Bible speak for itself). The Gideons are active in 170 countries, including the United States, placing Bibles in public areas—hotel and motel rooms, hospitals, jails and prisons, military installations through chaplains, and colleges.

I have several booklets published by the Gideons, filled with conversion testimonies. Story after story illustrates the transforming impact of Bible reading, even when it isn't explained by an "expert." Let me tell you just one.

In 1979 Filemon Lanza of Nicaragua was captured by the Sandinista guerrillas. Of fifty-eight soldiers, only seven would survive the brutality and the interrogations. One day Filemon found a Gideon New Testament in his language and turned to "the verses listed for those who are hurt, defeated or lonely." Though he didn't understand it all, "the words renewed his spirit."⁵

Tortured again and again, Filemon retreated to the comfort of his New Testament, until the truths he read led him to receive Jesus Christ as his Savior. During the six years of his confinement, he read the New Testament twenty-seven times and the complete Bible fifteen. Finally released in 1985, Filemon became a local pastor, instrumental in establishing six churches that are teaching the Bible.

Filemon's story of how the simple act of Bible reading can transform someone's life is just one of nearly 150 in this one small Gideon booklet. Not all of the stories are as dramatic as Filemon's, but the effect is always the same: Time and again the Bible is shown to have a powerful impact upon the lives of those who read it.

Impact on the Western World

As the Bible transforms individuals, it influences whole societies. The sum total of personal responses can be likened to many mountain streams flowing into bubbling brooks, gaining momentum as fast-moving tributaries

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that eventually merge together as a mighty river. Christianity in the Roman Empire was like that.

Initially the Romans and the Jews resisted the influence of the new movement called Christianity, but its impact upon the common people was profound. At one point Jewish leaders in the Macedonian city of Thessalonica admitted, "These men who have upset the world have come here also" (Acts 17:6). Evidently the spread of Christianity, including the writings of Paul and the disciples of Jesus, was having a significant influence on the Roman Empire.

Yet Christianity and the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) didn't become universally accepted throughout the empire until the fourth century A.D. At the death of the Roman emperor Diocletian, a power struggle arose between Constantine in the West and Maxentius in the East. On the night before the decisive battle at the Milvian Bridge in northern Italy, Constantine had a vision of a flaming cross in the sky. He made a vow that if he won the battle, he would favor Christianity. He did win, and he did keep his vow. In fact, in A.D. 313 Constantine declared the entire Roman Empire to be Christian.

Shortly after Constantine Christianized the Roman Empire, another significant development secured a prominent place for the Bible in Western civilization. A monk by the name of Jerome translated the Bible into Latin, the official language of the empire. This new translation not only served the religious needs of the church, it also became the authority for life throughout the empire. The impact of the Bible on thought and culture was profound and pervasive.

At the fall of the Roman Empire in the fifth century, the Western world was plunged into a millennium of general ignorance and cultural decline, labeled by historians as the Dark Ages. During this period the Roman Catholic Church continued to exert a strong influence on territorial leaders, but the actual teachings of Jesus were buried in an avalanche of ecclesiastical intrigue and selfish ambition. The priesthood became morally corrupt, and political leaders became users of the church rather than servers of the truth. There were pockets of orthodoxy, but the Bible's influence during the Middle Ages was more superficial than real.

Critics of the Bible often point to this period of time as evidence that Christianity is essentially crude and barbaric, having little regard for anything but itself. The Holy Crusades of the eleventh and twelfth centuries,

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for instance, were anything but holy. The Crusades were attempts on the part of the European church to liberate Jerusalem and the Holy Lands from Muslim rule, but the brutalities committed by the “Christian” Crusaders against both Muslims and Jews were atrocious. What was done in the name of Jesus and the cross was in reality a denial of both. It has long since been an embarrassment to true Christianity.

By the fourteenth century, significant calls for reform appeared within the Roman Catholic system of Europe. The fifteenth century saw men of great spiritual integrity like John Wycliffe in England, Peter Waldo in France, and John Hus in Bohemia, who began to react to the widespread perversion of the teachings of the Bible by raising their voices in protest.

In the sixteenth century Martin Luther of Germany joined a growing line of protesting reformers who yearned for change within the church. Luther simply went back to the Bible and demanded that the church return to its basic teachings. Luther encouraged reform by translating the Scriptures into German so that the people could read the Bible for themselves. Throughout the Middle Ages, the Roman Church had retained Jerome’s Latin translation as its “official” Bible, even when Latin had become an ecclesiastical language that was no longer understood by the general population.

As the teachings of the Bible were restored to the common man, the force of its message once again invigorated the culture. The lesson learned here is that the Bible was never intended to be locked up in a synagogue or church; it was meant to be unleashed into the mainstream of life. Whenever that has happened, the Bible has had an astounding influence on quality of life and social improvement.

After a post-Reformation period of religious decline in England, that nation was again spiritually awakened with the evangelistic preaching from the Bible by men such as George Whitefield and John and Charles Wesley. This eighteenth-century spiritual awakening also led to social reform—the establishment of hospitals and orphanages and eventually organizations such as the Salvation Army.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Britain was recognized as the world’s leading colonial power. She had established her rule and exported her way of life all over the world—in Africa, the Far East, North America, the West Indies, and even Australia and New Zealand. An old saying captured the importance of England in colonial times: “The sun never sets on the British Empire.” It stands

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to reason that if the English culture was influenced by the Bible, so was the rest of the world.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, a missionary movement emerged. Known as “the father of the modern missionary movement,” William Carey took the message of the Bible to India. Later Hudson Taylor would go to China, and David Livingstone to Africa. The widely supported British and Foreign Bible Society was formed to provide Bibles in all of the major languages, with the express purpose of distributing Bibles worldwide. Reflecting on his times, the brilliant English writer Charles Dickens wrote in 1815, “The New Testament is the very best book that ever was or ever will be known in the world.”

Continuing Impact in the New World

Anyone studying the history of Western civilization has to be impressed with the influence of the Bible on Western thought. What is not so often recognized, though, is that this influence has continued into modern times. In spite of the recent secularization of our culture, the underpinnings of our society still have biblical roots, and a large segment of our society is still committed to the Bible as the foundation for life.

A significant concern of the British Empire in the eighteenth century was what was happening across the Atlantic in the New World. Many, if not most, of the early colonists had come to America seeking greater religious freedom. The Pilgrims on the *Mayflower* landed at Plymouth Rock with their Bibles in hand. Other groups, such as the Puritans with their deep reverence for the Bible, established colonies along the shores of the new land. In fact, all of the original thirteen colonies were significantly influenced by the Bible.

As the Revolutionary War birthed a new nation, a Constitution was framed by men deeply committed to the teachings of the Bible. Referring to the Bible, Andrew Jackson said, “That book, sir, is the rock on which our republic rests.” Great universities such as Harvard, Yale, and Princeton were established to train men and women in biblical thinking and Christian service. Ever since the time of the Civil War, the United States currency has carried the inscription, “In God We Trust.” And the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag includes the phrase, “one nation, under God.”

The Bible’s impact on American society is evidenced in comments by

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former American Presidents. Consider the following sampling, as compiled by Grant Jeffrey:

- **John Quincy Adams**, sixth President: “So great is my veneration of the Bible, that the earlier my children begin to read it the more confident will be my hope that they will prove useful citizens of their country and respectable members of society.”
- **Abraham Lincoln**: “I believe the Bible is the best gift God has ever given to man. All the good from the Saviour of the world is communicated to us through this book.”
- **Woodrow Wilson**: “A man has found himself when he has found his relation to the rest of the universe, and here is the Book in which those relations are set forth. . . . I ask every man and woman in this audience that from this day on they will realize that part of the destiny of America lies in their daily perusal of this great Book.”
- **Dwight D. Eisenhower**: “To read the Bible is to take a trip to a fair land where the spirit is strengthened and faith renewed.”⁶

You can see that respected leaders have recognized the important contribution of the Bible to America’s greatness as a nation. The roots of our American culture in the Bible are indelibly displayed across the pages of our national history.

Explaining the Bible’s Impact

We have seen that over a period of two millennia the Bible has had a substantial, worldwide impact. To what can we attribute that influence? As with every other religion, some cultural and traditional values in Christianity serve to perpetuate the system from generation to generation. But there appears to be more here than mere religion.

The Bible is more about transformation than information. As people encounter the message of the Bible, their lives are transformed; as that influence is spread from person to person, whole cultures become transformed.

The contemporary story of the Huaorani people in Ecuador, as popularized by the movie *End of the Spear*, illustrates that observation. From the sixteenth century to the mid-1900s, the Auca Indians (as they were popularly known) were considered a tribe of naked “savages” living in the jungles of Ecuador. As late as the twentieth century, they still functioned as a primitive, Stone-Age people, given to killing others and each other as

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a way of life. In fact, by the 1960s killing within the tribe was so rampant that they were on the verge of annihilating themselves.

American missionaries attempted to reach these people in the mid-1950s. In January 1956 five young men landed their small plane on a river sandbar known as Curaray Beach, with the hopes of making friendly contact with the Auca people the next day. That night all five missionaries were killed, speared by the Indians.

Two missionary women—a sister and a wife of two of the slain men—continued to pursue a relationship with this tribe and, through an Auca girl named Dayuma, gained their confidence. Rachel Saint and Elisabeth Elliot and her daughter Valerie went to live with the Auca tribe in 1959, sharing with them the message of the Bible. The Aucas embraced the gospel of Christ and in that response found a reason to stop killing outsiders and each other. Transformed, they became compassionate, loving people. They were eager to read “God’s carvings” (the Bible) and to walk “God’s trail” (the Christian life).

Over the past fifty years this tribe has more than tripled in size, from six hundred to approximately two thousand people. The Bible, translated into their own language, has had an incredible impact on their personal lives and tribal culture. According to a recent article in *Christianity Today*, “the violent, short lives of the Waodani—called ‘Auca,’ or savages, at the time—were transformed. Mincaye, once a murderer of the missionaries, has become a missionary himself.” It seems that half of all Waodani deaths prior to the arrival of Rachel and Elisabeth were intratribal murders. Anthropologists say Christianity was pivotal in ending the violence. One says, “I believe that conversion to Christianity was instrumental in saving the Waodani.”⁷ They now have built and are running their own dental clinic, pharmacy, and school. They still live primitively in the Ecuadorian jungle, but they have been transformed by the message of the Bible.

Similar stories can be told about various people in diverse settings around the world. Over the centuries the Bible has proved itself to be a book like no other book. The history of its impact on the world has been nothing short of phenomenal.

Conclusion

Now that you've read this chapter, perhaps the Bible has your attention. No other book in the history of mankind has had such an impact on humanity, and its story of success should at least pique one's curiosity. In his book *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell shares an interesting statistic:

The total distribution of copies of the Bible or portions thereof in 1998 reaches a staggering 585 million—and these numbers only include Bibles distributed in the United Bible Societies!

To put it another way, if you lined up all the people who received Bibles or Scripture selections last year, and handed a Bible to one of them every five seconds, it would take more than ninety-two years.⁸

Could there be an outside chance that this book is indeed divinely inspired? Lee Strobel thought so. I've been convinced, as have millions of people throughout history.

This brings us to our next question: *What does the Bible claim concerning itself? Is it possible that the Bible is just a very good book written by very capable people, or does it claim to be something more than that?* Well, let's begin to look at the Bible itself, and first of all let's examine its own claims.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Quoted in Grant Jeffrey, *The Handwriting of God* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1997), p. 40.

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