

NEW
ANGLICIZED
EDITION

The COMPLETELY UPDATED *and* EXPANDED CLASSIC

EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT

LIFE-CHANGING TRUTH
FOR A SCEPTICAL WORLD

JOSH McDOWELL
& SEAN McDOWELL, PhD



Here's a treasure trove of apologetic gems! This is an indispensable book that all Christians should keep within reach. Countless people benefited from the original version, but this updated and expanded edition makes this volume even more valuable and timely. Thank you, Josh and Sean—this classic resource has my very highest recommendation!

LEE STROBEL, bestselling author of *The Case for Christ* and professor of Christian Thought at Houston Baptist University

This book changed my life. It showed me the staggering welter of evidence for the historicity of the Bible—and convinced me that having faith in the biblical God is infinitely more rational than not having such faith. Any agnostic or atheist reluctant to become a Christian must take every precaution available to avoid this book.

ERIC METAXAS, author of *Martin Luther: The Man Who Rediscovered God and Changed the World* and host of the nationally-syndicated Eric Metaxas Show

In 1972, shortly after the accident in which I became paralysed, I picked up a book that helped solidify my belief in God and faith in Christ. Still struggling to accept my wheelchair, I needed rock-solid evidence that there was a personal God who genuinely cared about my plight. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* was that remarkable book, and I'm so happy that this timeless classic is now updated and being released to a whole new generation of readers! Can't recommend it enough!

JONI EARECKSON TADA, founder/CEO, Joni and Friends International Disability Center

It is not without reason that *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* has stood the test of time with readers around the world for nearly four decades. Josh McDowell has not only been a pioneer in the field of apologetics and worldviews but a friend and encourager to many, including me. I am thrilled that he has partnered with his son, Sean, to update his classic book and know it will challenge and inspire you.

RAVI ZACHARIAS, author and speaker

Significant. Timely. Life-Changing. For decades, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* has met believers, seekers, and sceptics at the intersection of faith and fact, laying a foundation of unshakeable, time-proven truth for us to stand on through ages of scepticism, mysticism, and so-called tolerance. I am thrilled for the updated and expanded edition of this landmark resource to reach the hearts and minds of a rising generation, and I trust it will have the same impact in their lives as it did in mine. I'm grateful for Josh and Sean McDowell's relentless passion to equip and empower God's people to confidently and boldly stand for truth. You'll want to keep this book close at hand!

LOUIE GIGLIO, pastor of Passion City Church, founder of Passion Conferences, author of *Goliath Must Fall*

With over one million people impacted by this practical resource we are thrilled to see it's been updated and ready for the next million! Our hearts are united with the McDowells and their passion to see truth understood and embraced by a culture that desperately needs God's Word in their lives! May our Lord use this tool to shape his people into our Saviour's image! Sanctify us in your truth O Lord!

KAY ARTHUR AND DAVID ARTHUR, founder and CEO/president of Precept Ministries International

When I was a college student full of questions about the authenticity of my faith, I used *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* as my go-to reference book. I'm grateful to Josh and Sean for this updated release for my two sons.

JIM DALY, president of Focus on the Family

Josh McDowell's *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* is now a classic of apologetics, having served to spur a renaissance of historical Christian evidences in our day. It is therefore a welcome development that this classic has now been updated in light of the recent and significant advances in biblical studies and particularly in historical Jesus studies.

WILLIAM LANE CRAIG, professor of philosophy, Talbot School of Theology; Houston Baptist University

When I was in college and needed material to discuss with sceptical friends, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* was a key resource for me. Now it is updated and an even better repository for discussion. It remains a valuable collection of information on issues people raise to challenge the faith that not only gives the key data points but allows you to track the conversation in key resources—a real treasure.

DARRELL L. BOCK, Executive Director for Cultural Engagement, Howard G. Hendricks Center for Christian Leadership and Cultural Engagement; Senior Research Professor of New Testament Studies, Dallas Theological Seminary

My friend Josh McDowell and his son Sean have given us an updated and relevant twenty-first-century tool to encourage faith and trust in the reliability of Scripture. For those who want to understand how to defend the veracity of the Christian faith, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* is the book for you.

DR TONY EVANS, senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship and president of The Urban Alternative

When I was searching for answers to my doubt, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* helped to keep my eyes, heart, and mind open to the truth. This new edition not only revisits the arguments from the original work, but considerably strengthens those arguments with up-to-date research from top biblical scholars. This new work is an apologetics multivitamin for the person seeking a healthy diet of truth. I was so excited to see the legacy of Josh McDowell's ministry carrying on through his son, Sean. The excellence in argumentation with the father-son author combination makes this book a true one-of-a-kind!

MARY JO SHARP, assistant professor of apologetics, Houston Baptist University; Founder of Confident Christianity Apologetics Ministry

As I think about how to help students and young adults thrive in a culture that is hostile to Christian thought, I'm most concerned about helping them access not just the best information, but the best relationships and mentorships. As your imagination is captivated by what the next decade of discipling will look like, imagine the combination of the revised version of *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* combined with the power of your relationship and influence in the lives of the young people you disciple. You will be the catalyst that influences the hearts of these young life, and this remarkable resource will guide your conversation as you help shape the minds of a new generation of disciples.

MATT MARKINS, president of Awana Global Ministries

Scholars, students, and the general public will benefit greatly from this new and greatly expanded edition of *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. One of the things I like about it is how clearly all of the relevant topics are laid out. The problems, the challenges, and grounds for scepticism are clearly and fairly expressed—there are no straw men. Josh and Sean McDowell do not dodge the issues; they tackle them head on and do so in an informed and compelling manner. *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* will serve well another generation.

CRAIG A. EVANS, PhD., D.Habil., John Bisagno Distinguished
Professor of Christian Origins, Houston Baptist University

Josh McDowell was one of the first guests to feature on my radio debate show *Unbelievable?* and Sean has been one of the most recent. I've been hugely impressed by both generations of Christian thinkers. In this new edition of *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, their combined knowledge, integrity and passion for sharing the gospel has produced something truly special. *Evidence* was the book that first brought evidential apologetics to a popular audience. This updated edition, comprehensive in scope and yet immensely readable, will powerfully present the latest evidence to a new generation with a new set of questions. This book remains an essential resource for every thinking Christian who wants to give a reason for the hope that they have.

JUSTIN BRIERLEY, presenter of the *Unbelievable?*
radio show and podcast

Josh McDowell has been a heroic voice of reasonable faith for a generation. He and his son Sean now team up to answer the sceptics and cynics of today with a reason to believe.

PASTOR JACOB ARANZA, bestselling author and founder of
Our Savior's Church and Aranza Outreach

I was one of countless thousands of students who benefited greatly from the original *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. As a college student in the 1980s, I experienced the scholarly attacks on the trustworthiness of Scripture first hand. At the time, it wasn't easy to find arguments from scholars defending the reliability of the Bible in a way that responded to serious academic attacks. The book introduced me to those scholars and convinced me that the death of God had been greatly exaggerated! That's why I'm delighted that Josh and Sean McDowell have teamed up to write this new edition of *Evidence* for a new generation. The attacks on Christianity have got even more intense, but Josh and Sean more than meet the attacks. They show that you don't have to choose between faith and reason. I'm confident that their book will not only help Christians fortify their own faith, but will bring many sceptics to faith in Christ.

JAY RICHARDS, PhD, assistant research professor, Busch School of
Business & Economics, The Catholic University of America

I am excited about this new edition of *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, and honoured to endorse this powerful book. Though hard to believe, this version is even better than the original and I know something about the original, because it was one of the most important books in my life—it was instrumental in my spiritual journey from sceptic to believer. Josh and Sean McDowell approach apologetics comprehensively and boldly, taking on every imaginable challenge to Christianity's truth claims, and answering every one of them thoroughly and convincingly. This father and son team represents the very best of Christian family love, and this extraordinarily important book

is a glorious outworking of that love for unbelievers—because it will remove their obstacles to belief—and for believers—because it will reinforce and reinvigorate their faith like few other books on the market. God bless both Josh and Sean for this marvellous and obedient work of evangelism!

DAVID LIMBAUGH, author of seven New York Times bestsellers including *The Emmaus Code* and the #1 bestseller *Crimes Against Liberty*

I have watched for years as Christian colleges have essentially failed to teach the next generation how to defend a Biblical worldview and the orthodoxy of our faith. I am determined to not let this happen at any university under my charge. This is why we've established the Josh McDowell Institute for Christian Thought and Apologetics at Oklahoma Wesleyan University. I simply will not let my students graduate without being confronted with the *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*. I pray that all other Christian scholars and leaders would do no less.

EVERETT PIPER, PhD, president of Oklahoma Wesleyan University, home of the Josh McDowell Institute for Christian Thought and Apologetics

This book is a valuable resource for those wanting to know whether there truly is enough evidence to show that the Christian message is true. As its title suggests, it presents a case to that end, which must be considered carefully by anyone who is truly seeking an answer to the ultimate question of worldviews.

MICHAEL LICONA, associate professor of theology, Houston Baptist University

In an era where spiritual beliefs are fluid and truth is increasingly viewed as a four-letter word, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* fills a desperate need. *Evidence* provides a logical, thorough, compelling examination of the preponderance of evidence for the truth of Christianity. With this newly updated edition of a book that was foundational in my own apologetics training as a teenager, Josh and Sean McDowell are equipping another generation for gospel conversations.

Despite our culture's current aversion to truth—or perhaps precisely because of it—it's more important than ever that Christians grasp the evidences that support their faith, so they can gently, lovingly and confidently share the Gospel with their unreached friends.

GREG STIER, founder and CEO of Dare 2 Share

EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT

Josh McDowell has shared the gospel with over 25 million people across the globe through his work with Cru (Campus Crusade for Christ) and the global outreach of Josh McDowell Ministry. He is a leading figure in the Christian apologetics movement and the author or coauthor of over 145 books, including the classic *More Than a Carpenter*.

Sean McDowell, PhD is an associate professor of Christian apologetics at Biola University and the resident scholar for Summit California. A leading Christian scholar, Sean has authored or coauthored several books on apologetics, intelligent design, ethics, and youth ministry.

Other Josh McDowell titles available from Authentic Media

Answers to Tough Questions (with Don Stewart)

More Than a Carpenter

The Unshakable Truth

EVIDENCE THAT DEMANDS A VERDICT

LIFE-CHANGING TRUTH FOR
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AND
SEAN McDOWELL, PhD



CHAPTER 1

THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE

OVERVIEW

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I. Introduction

People often say to us, “Oh, you don’t read the Bible, do you?” Or they say, “The Bible is just another book. You really ought to read . . .” Then they name some of their favourite books. Others have a Bible in their library, describing how it sits on the shelf next to other “greats”, such as Homer’s *Odyssey*, Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, or Austen’s *Pride and Prejudice*. Their Bible may be dusty, not broken in, but they still recognize its historical influence, thinking of it as one of the classics. Still others make degrading comments about the Bible because they are surprised that anyone might take it seriously enough to spend

time reading it. I (Josh) was once like them. I even tried to refute the Bible as God’s Word to humanity. I finally concluded, however, that not accepting the Bible must result from being either biased, prejudiced, or simply unread.

Voices like those above brought up many issues with which I grappled. As a result of all my research about the Bible, I concluded that the best word to describe the Bible is the word *unique*.

This chapter focuses exclusively on the unique origin and nature of the Bible, the profound impact it has had on western civilization, and its responsibility for much of the progress of human history. This chapter will not attempt to demonstrate the validity

or truth of the Bible, nor its claims to inspiration, infallibility, or inerrancy, which will be addressed in subsequent chapters.

II. Unique in Character

There are several uncommon and distinctive features of the Bible's history, composition, and content. F. F. Bruce, former Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester, summarizes these characteristics:

The Bible, at first sight, appears to be a collection of literature—mainly Jewish. If we enquire into the circumstances under which the various Biblical documents were written, we find that they were written at intervals over a space of nearly 1400 years. The writers wrote in various lands, from Italy in the west to Mesopotamia and possibly Persia in the east. The writers themselves were a heterogeneous number of people, not only separated from each other by hundreds of years and hundreds of miles but belonging to the most diverse walks of life. In their ranks we have kings, herdsmen, soldiers, legislators, fishermen, statesmen, courtiers, priests and prophets, a tentmaking rabbi and a Gentile physician, not to speak of others of whom we know nothing apart from the writings they have left us. The writings themselves belong to a great variety of literary types. They include 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 (Bruce, BP, 79).

Now let us look in more detail into some of these specific characteristics.

A. Unique in Its Time Span

While most scholars agree that all the books of the New Testament were completed by the second half of the first century AD (Kitchen, OROT, 500), there is sufficient evidence to confirm that the earliest forms of the Bible were written during the time of the Hebrew exodus out of Egypt (c. 1400–1200 BC). This means that the composition of the biblical writings, from the earliest book of the Bible to the last of the New Testament writings, spans a period of 1,300 to 1,500 years. In comparison to other literary and historical works, the Bible is exceptional in that it was written and assembled over a vast number of generations.

B. Unique in Its Geographical Production

Unlike most other literary works, the composition and transmission of the biblical books did not emerge from a homogenous community located in a single region of the ancient world. Rather, these works were written by peoples in areas as diverse as Rome in the West, Egypt in the South, and Mesopotamia in the East. This amazing geographical and ethnic diversity distinguishes the Bible's origins from that of all other books.

C. Unique in Its Authorship

The Bible is as diverse in its authorship as it is in its production over a long period of time and the multiple geographical regions in which it originated. Authored by approximately forty different people (some known, some unknown) and edited and preserved by countless scribal schools and communities, the Bible preserves for us the writings of a vast array of different personalities from widely divergent social circumstances. We discover kings surrounded by power and wealth (e.g. Solomon) on the one hand, to lower class Galilean fishermen (e.g. Peter and John) on the other. Between these two socioeconomic extremes

one finds an exiled prince (Moses), military leaders (e.g. Joshua and David), trained philosophers (e.g. the authors of Job and Ecclesiastes), a tax collector (Matthew), a historian (Luke), and a zealous Pharisee (Paul). These authors recorded the stories of all kinds of people. Professor Mary Ellen Chase remarks:

The story-tellers of the Bible . . . understood men and women of all sorts and in all conditions. There is literally no type of person whom they have neglected. All are here: the wise and the foolish, the rich and the poor, the faithful and the treacherous, the designing and the generous, the pitiful and the prosperous, the innocent and the guilty, the spendthrift and the miser, the players of practical jokes and their discomfited victims, the sorry, the tired, the old, the exasperated young, misled and impetuous girls, young men who lusted and young men who loved, friends who counted no cost for friendship, bad-mannered children and children well brought up, a little boy who had a headache in a hay-field, a little servant girl who wanted so much her master's health that she dared to give him good, if unpalatable, advice. Once one discovers such persons as these, still alive after many centuries, they become not only fascinating in themselves but typical of persons whom we know today (Chase, BCR, 5).

D. Unique in Its Literary Genres

The Bible is also unique in that a multitude of distinct literary forms and genres can be found within its pages, as complete compositions consisting of a single genre (e.g. Song of Songs) or complete compositions imbued with multiple genres (e.g. Exodus). Gerd Theissen, professor of New Testament at the University of Heidelberg, highlights the importance of biblical genres:

Biblical texts are of various sorts. Treatment of one sort of text provides practice in dealing

with all texts of the same sort. Narrative, poetic, legal, and argumentative texts of the Bible can therefore be treated as exemplary, as well as the various biblical genres identified by that area of biblical scholarship called form criticism. In principle no single sort of text is privileged. Central themes appear in all forms: creation is recorded as *narrative*; trust is expressed in *prayer* (Psalm 23); monotheism is mandated in a *commandment* (Exod. 20:2); justification is expounded in a *disputatious letter* (Romans); theodicy—the question of God's justice—is examined in *wisdom dialogue* (Job). The Bible is not a homogenous text but a compendium of different forms and genres. Each must be appreciated on its own terms (Theissen, BCC, 30–31).

Other ancient literary works utilize a multiplicity of literary genres, but the biblical authors use them in order to focus their audience's attention on one supreme metanarrative. Alison Jack, professor of Bible and Literature at the University of Edinburgh, illustrates the interplay between this unifying biblical motif and the multiplicity of literary forms:

While one overarching story may be discerned, involving the central character of the one God, creator and sustainer of the earth, and his relationship with those who accept a relationship with him, and those who do not, there are many different voices behind the books of the Bible. A multitude of literary genres are found here, from long and short narratives to poetry and song, genealogies and historical accounts, biography, letters and apocalyptic writing. These voices tell different versions of the story, from a variety of perspectives (Jack, BL, 6).

E. Unique in Its Languages

The Bible is written in three different languages (two Semitic and one Indo-European),

each with a unique character and essence. Larry Walker, former professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, outlines each of the biblical languages:

Hebrew is actually one of several Canaanite dialects which included Phoenician, Ugaritic, and Moabite. Other Canaanite dialects (for example, Ammonite) existed but have left insufficient inscriptions for scholarly investigation. Such dialects were already present in the land of Canaan before its conquest by the Israelites. . . . Hebrew belongs to the Semitic family of languages; these languages were used from the Mediterranean Sea to the mountains east of the Euphrates River valley, and from Armenia (Turkey) in the north to the southern extremity of the Arabian peninsula. . . . Hebrew, like the other early Semitic languages, concentrates on observation more than reflection. That is, things that are generally observed according to their appearance as phenomena, not analyzed as to their inward being or essence. Effects are observed but not traced through a series of causes. Hebrew's vividness, conciseness, and simplicity make the language difficult to translate fully. It is amazingly concise and direct. For example, Psalm 23 contains fifty-five words; most translations require about twice that many to translate it. . . . Hebrew is a pictorial language in which the past is not merely described but verbally painted. Not just a landscape is presented but a moving panorama. The course of events is reenacted in the mind's sight. . . . Many profound theological expressions of the Old Testament are tightly bound up with Hebrew language and grammar. Even the most sacred name of God himself, "the LORD" (Jehovah or Yahweh), is directly related to the Hebrew verb "to be" (or perhaps "to cause to be") (Walker, BL, 218–221).

Walker also explains:

Aramaic is linguistically very close to Hebrew and similar in structure. Aramaic texts in the Bible are written in the same script as Hebrew. In contrast to Hebrew, Aramaic uses a larger vocabulary, including many loan words, and a greater variety of connectives. It also contains an elaborate system of tenses, developed through the use of participles with pronouns or with various forms of the verb "to be". Although Aramaic is less euphonious and poetical than Hebrew, it is probably superior as a vehicle of exact expression. Aramaic has perhaps the longest continuous living history of any language known. It was used during the Bible's patriarchal period and is still spoken by a few people today. Aramaic and its cognate, Syriac, evolved into many dialects in different places and periods. Characterized by simplicity, clarity, and precision, it adapted easily to the various needs of everyday life. It could serve equally well as a language for scholars, pupils, lawyers, or merchants. Some have described it as the Semitic equivalent of English. . . . Gradually, especially after the Babylonian exile, Aramaic influence pervaded the land of Palestine. Nehemiah complained that children from mixed marriages were unable to speak Hebrew (Neh. 13:24). The Jews seem to have continued using Aramaic widely during the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods. Eventually the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Aramaic paraphrases, called Targums, some of which have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. . . . Aramaic served as a transition from Hebrew to Greek as the language spoken by Jews in Jesus' day. In that sense Aramaic connects Old Testament Hebrew with New Testament Greek (Walker, BL, 228–230).

Walker continues:

The Greek language is beautiful, rich, and harmonious as an instrument of communication. It is a fitting tool both for vigorous thought and for religious devotion. During its classic period, Greek was the language of one of the world's greatest cultures. During that cultural period, language, literature, and art flourished more than war. The Greek mind was preoccupied with ideals of beauty. The Greek language reflected artistry in its philosophical dialogues, its poetry, and its stately orations. The Greek language was also characterized by strength and vigor. It was capable of variety and striking effects. Greek was a language of argument, with a vocabulary and style that could penetrate and clarify phenomena rather than simply tell stories. . . . The conquests of Alexander the Great encouraged the spread of Greek language and culture. Regional dialects were largely replaced by "Hellenistic" or "koine" (common) Greek. Koine Greek is a dialect preserved and known through thousands of inscriptions reflecting all aspects of daily life. The koine dialect added many vernacular expressions to Attic Greek, thus making it more cosmopolitan. Simplifying the grammar also better adapted it to a worldwide culture. . . . Translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek was an epochal event. The Septuagint (the earliest Greek translation of the Old Testament) later had a strong influence on Christian thought. . . . The New Testament epistles blend the wisdom of Hebrew and the dialectic philosophy of Greek. Sermons recorded in the New Testament combine the Hebrew prophetic message with Greek oratorical force (Walker, BL, 230–234).

F. Unique in Its Teachings

Not only is its historical background and development unique, but the Bible's message is also unique. This is what distinguishes

Christianity from all other religious and secular worldviews. Kenneth R. Samples, adjunct professor of apologetics at Biola University, and senior research scholar for Reasons to Believe, illustrates how many of the claims made by biblical Christianity fly in the face of all other worldviews:

Much of society today knows so little about the specific beliefs of classical Christianity. Therefore, many people are unaware of historic Christianity's unique perspective on God, Christ, the world, humankind, values, death, and suffering. . . . Historic Christianity embodies numerous beliefs that are theologically and philosophically volatile (in the best sense of the term). The Christian faith contains powerful truth-claims that have transformed the church and turned the world upside down. Christianity's initial dangerous ideas started with twelve men (Jesus's apostles) and within three hundred years came to dominate the ancient Roman world. And for more than a thousand years after that, the historic faith dominated all aspects of Western civilization. . . . The advance and entrenchment of secularism over the last couple hundred years make these Christian ideas fresh and explosive. Not safe, but good. . . . The historic Christian truth-claims presented in this book can, then, be viewed as having a renewed sense of danger (Samples, 7T, 10).

In the following we focus on three essential (i.e. necessary or indispensable) Christian teachings, without which one would no longer be speaking of biblical Christianity.

1. The Trinity

Rooted deeply in the pages of Scripture, later formalized at councils such as Nicaea (325) and Constantinople (381), and professed in confessions such as *The Articles of Religion* (1571) and *The Westminster Confession of*

Faith (1643–1646), is the understanding of the ontology of God that can only be described as unique. Wayne Grudem, research professor of theology and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary, gives a simple definition of the Trinity: “God eternally exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God, and there is one God” (Grudem, ST, 226). Another way of stating this view of God is that there is one divine nature (essence) existing as three eternal persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While this description could increase in linguistic complexity and qualification, these simple formulations are sufficient to distinguish Trinitarian Christianity from unitarian religions (e.g. Judaism and Islam) and nontheistic religions (e.g. Buddhism). Nancy Pearcey, professor of apologetics at Houston Baptist University, captures one existential implication of this unique biblical teaching:

The balance of unity and diversity in the Trinity gives a model for human social life, because it implies that both individuality and relationship exist within the Godhead itself. God is being-in-communion. Humans are made in the image of a God who is a tri-unity—whose very nature consists in reciprocal love and communication among the Persons of the Trinity. This model provides a solution to the age-old opposition between collectivism and individualism. Over against collectivism, the Trinity implies the dignity and uniqueness of individual persons. Over against radical individualism, the Trinity implies that relationships are not created by sheer choice but are built into the very essence of human nature. We are not atomistic individuals but are created for relationships (Pearcey, TT, 132).

Some religious systems (e.g. fourth-century Arians, Muslims, Mormons, and Jehovah’s

Witnesses) have attempted throughout history to show that the Trinity is nowhere to be found in the pages of Scripture. However, careful analysis of three categories of Scripture demonstrates that this opposition is exegetically unsound and groundless. These three categories consist of Scripture that attests to: (1) God’s essential oneness (i.e. monotheism); (2) the divinity of each Person (Father, Son, Holy Spirit); and (3) the simultaneous distinction of each Person.

1. *God’s essential oneness (monotheism)*. Both the Old Testament and New Testament confirm that there is only one God. (Throughout this chapter, Scripture quotes are taken from the NIV, unless otherwise noted.)
 - OT: Deuteronomy 6:4—“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one” (cf. Deut. 4:35, 39; 1 Kings 8:60; Isa. 43:10; 44:6; 45:5, 6, 21, 22).
 - NT: 1 Corinthians 8:6—“Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live” (cf. Mark 12:29; John 17:3; Rom. 3:30; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 2:19).
2. *The divinity of each person*. Both the Old Testament and New Testament confirm that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each fully divine.
 - The Father: 2 Corinthians 1:2—“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:2).
 - The Son: John 1:1, 14—“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his

glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (cf. Isa. 9:6; John 5:18; 8:58; 10:30; 20:28; Phil. 2:5–6; Col. 1:15; Heb. 1:3, 10; Titus 2:13; 2 Peter 1:1; Rev. 1:8; 22:12, 13, 16, 20).

- The Holy Spirit: 1 Corinthians 2:10–11—“These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God” (cf. Ps. 139:7, 8; John 3:5–7; Acts 5:3–4; 13:2; 2 Cor. 3:17–18; 1 John 3:9).

3. *The simultaneous distinction of each person.* The New Testament confirms that the persons of the Trinity are distinct. Example: Matthew 28:19—“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (cf. Matt. 3:16, 17; 17:5; John 14:16, 17, 26; 15:26; 16:13, 14; 17:1; Acts 10:38).

Considered in their entirety, these passages of Scripture proclaim one God, eternally existing as three distinct persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), each being fully divine.

2. Incarnation and Atonement

Erwin Lutzer, senior pastor of Moody Church in Chicago, poses a provocative question to contemporary western culture: “Does Christ belong on the same shelf with Buddha, Krishna, Bahá’úlláh, and Zoroaster? Like Christ, such leaders (and others) have taught some rather lofty ethical ideas. Even if we say He stands taller than the rest, have we given Him His due? Or is He to be placed on an entirely different shelf altogether?”

(Lutzer, CAOG, 13). In answer to Lutzer’s question, the Bible clearly proclaims that Jesus of Nazareth is to be placed in a separate category reserved for Him alone, that of a God-man, who enters into creation to pay the penalty for the sins we have all committed.

Grudem lays out the fundamental teaching of the incarnation as “the act of God the Son whereby he took to himself a human nature” (Grudem, ST, 543). Samples highlights this extraordinary Christian teaching:

Of all the world’s religions, only Christianity proclaims that God has become embodied as a human being. Of all the founders of the world’s great religious traditions, only Jesus Christ claims to be God. Only the historic Christian faith proclaims that to encounter Jesus Christ is to directly and personally encounter God himself. Indeed at the very heart of historic Christianity is a truly astounding—one may say *dangerous*—truth-claim. This central article of the Christian faith is the incarnation: *God became man in Jesus of Nazareth.* This truth is a distinctive feature of the Christian faith, for it is unique to Christianity to discover a God who not only takes the initiative in becoming flesh but also does so in order to redeem sinful human beings (Samples, 7T, 61).

One radical, or, as Samples states, “dangerous” implication (among others) of this teaching is that God would humiliate himself by condescending to the level of humanity with all its frailties, weaknesses, and temptations. For many religions, the image of the Almighty God being born like every other human child seems so objectionable that it is blasphemous. For the Christian, however, this act of the infinite Son of God forever uniting himself to a human nature (body, soul, and spirit) is the most profound sacrificial and costly expression of divine love in history.

Throughout history, however, varying groups have taught from opposite sides of the spectrum, some rejecting the deity of Jesus (e.g. Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses) and some rejecting his humanity (e.g. early Apollinarians and Docetists). However, a proper examination of the biblical data, once again, reveals the correct teaching that (1) Jesus is truly God and (2) Jesus is truly human.

(1) *Jesus is truly God.* As seen in the previous section, there are numerous passages of Scripture that attest to Jesus' divinity. These lead Lutzer to answer his original question when he states, "The divinity of Christ sharply divides Christianity from all of the other religions of the world. This is the great divide, the unbridgeable chasm, a gulf that extends from here to eternity" (Lutzer, CAOG, 103).

(2) *Jesus is truly human.* Luke 2:7—"And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them." Many other passages of Scripture clearly demonstrate Jesus' true humanity as he experienced physical limitations (Matt. 8:24; 21:18; Mark 5:30–32; Luke 22:44; John 4:6), experienced pain and death (Mark 14:33–36; Luke 17:25; 23:33; John 19:30), experienced human emotions (Matt. 26:37; Mark 3:5; 10:14; 14:32–42; Luke 7:9; 10:21; John 11:5, 35), and possessed essential human qualities (Matt. 26:12, 28; Luke 24:39; John 5:30; 11:33).

We cannot separate this unique biblical teaching of God becoming man from its ultimate purpose, the final reconciliation of man to his Creator, which was accomplished through the atonement, defined as "the work Christ did in his life and death to earn our salvation" (Grudem, ST, 568). As is shown in the New Testament writings (e.g. Rom. 3:25; 5:8; Gal. 3:13; Col. 1:13, 14; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John 2:2) the concept of God paying the price

for the sins of mankind is an indispensable truth of the Christian faith. It is this work of God that sets biblical Christianity apart from all other religious systems that are grounded in the moral actions (works) of people.

3. Faith vs. Works

C. S. Lewis once said, "The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God" (Lewis, MC rev. ed., 178). While other religious systems have offered theories for how man can achieve atonement for his own wickedness, Christianity alone proclaims that God himself offers all people the salvation that they absolutely cannot achieve on their own. Craig J. Hazen, founder and director of the Biola University Master of Arts in Christian Apologetics programme, states:

Christianity is unique in its offer of salvation by grace alone, a free gift from God to anyone who will receive it. In the history of religion, there have only been a couple of instances of a religious movement that considered salvation or enlightenment to be a free gift from a deity. But even in those cases (such as in *Amida* Buddhism or a certain form of *Bhakti* Hinduism), it is not a no-strings-attached kind of gift. There is still work to be done on the part of the devotees. Hence, the Christian tradition stands in a solitary spot in the spectrum of world religions when the apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8–9, "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Hazen, CWR, 146).

Samples demonstrates how a nearly identical view of humankind's salvation (based on meritorious works) arises out of dissimilar worldviews (i.e. traditional Islam and the contemporary individual spirituality of the average Westerner):

Though claiming to be heirs of the biblical tradition, Islam is not a religion of grace and redemption. Muslims believe that paradise is a just reward and hell is a rightful punishment. . . . It is a common Islamic belief that two angels follow each Muslim throughout life. The angel on the person's right records his or her good deeds, while the angel on the left records his or her bad deeds. A Muslim's destiny hinges on the preponderance of his actions as measured on a scale. Generally speaking, Muslims have no assurance that they will earn paradise, but this dilemma is often understood as an incentive to strive for greater submission to Allah's requirements. . . . In this manner, this influential world religion affirms what many religions teach: that paradise is a reward for moral goodness expressed in this life and that hell is punishment for a lack of sufficient ethical accomplishment. . . . Many people think God will grade on a curve and cut the virtuous among us some slack when it comes to assigning heaven and hell. Why? Because current culture says that at their core, most people are good. In other words, if their life's deeds were placed on a scale, the good would outweigh the bad (Samples, 7T, 135–136).

Against these two worldviews (which are otherwise categorically opposed to each other, yet unified on this principle), Samples presents the teaching of biblical Christianity regarding God's grace:

Against the backdrop of a near-global consensus that God sees humankind as being basically good and, therefore, worthy of heaven stands historic Christianity's . . . revolutionary notion that . . . in the eyes of God no one is or becomes morally acceptable by his or her own merit. In fact, it is fair to say that sin (moral transgression) is a much bigger problem than most people (including many Christians) realize. But the *good news* (Gospel) is that God's grace is deeper and

Jesus Christ is a much greater Savior than most people (including Christians) realize. . . . Christianity at its heart is a religion not of self-help but of divine rescue. According to the Gospels, what human beings need most is not moral guidance but rather a Savior (Samples, 7T, 136–137).

These unique Christian teachings suggest a radical departure from all other religious and secular thought. The biblical teaching about the Trinitarian nature of God clearly explains why human beings really need both (1) individual expression (each member of the Trinity is distinct and relates to humanity uniquely) and (2) relationship in community (the same three Persons exist in an eternally loving relationship with one another). The nature of the Trinity not only explains why humans long for both individuality and community, but it also provides an example for our relationships with one another. Furthermore, God affirms the intrinsic worth of every person who has ever lived by the incarnation of Jesus and his atoning sacrifice, as recorded in the Bible. Every one of us is fashioned in the "image of God" (Gen. 1:27; 9:6). Beyond this, however, the intrinsic moral worth of every human person and the divine sacrifice highlight a provocative dissimilarity between Christianity and all other religious systems. That is, a person's value is found in her very being, not in her behaviour. So it follows that even those persons considered by many to be irredeemable (e.g. Osama bin Laden, Adolf Eichmann, or Kim Jong-Il) remain valuable in the eyes of God. In his uniquely narrative style, Lewis illustrates what this divine love (a love not contingent upon human behaviour) would look like if ever truly applied:

I remember Christian teachers telling me long ago that I must hate a bad man's actions, but not hate the bad man: or, as they would say, hate

the sin but not the sinner. For a long time I used to think this a silly, straw-splitting distinction: how could you hate what a man did and not hate the man? But years later it occurred to me that there was one man to whom I had been doing this all my life—namely myself. However much I might dislike my own cowardice or conceit or greed, I went on loving myself. There had never been the slightest difficulty about it. In fact the very reason why I hated the things was that I loved the man. Just because I loved myself, I was sorry to find that I was the sort of man who did those things. Consequently, Christianity does not want us to reduce by one atom the hatred we feel for cruelty and treachery. We ought to hate them. Not one word of what we have said about them needs to be unsaid. But it does want us to hate them in the same way in which we hate things in ourselves: being sorry that the man should have done such things, and hoping, if it is anyway possible, that somehow, sometime, somewhere he can be cured and made human again. . . . I admit that this means loving people who have nothing lovable about them. But then, has oneself anything lovable about it? You love it simply because it is yourself. God intends us to love all selves in the same way and for the same reason: but He has given us the sum ready worked out in our own case to show us how it works. We have then to go on and apply the rule to all the other selves. Perhaps it makes it easier if we remember that that is how He loves us. Not for any nice, attractive qualities we think we have, but just because we are the things called selves. For really there is nothing else in us to love (Lewis, *MC*, rev. ed., 117, 120).

III. Unique in Impact

Clearly, the Bible has influenced civilization more than any other literary work in history. This section will not only provide evidence that the Bible is the most widely distributed

work ever written, but will also highlight its resilient history and demonstrate its foundational role in the advent of western civilization.

A. Unique in Its Circulation and Translation

From the first translation of the Hebrew Bible into the Greek Septuagint (LXX; see chapter 4) in the mid-third century BC, to the rise of biblical literacy with the invention of Gutenberg's printing press, to the surprising number of translations and its mass circulation, to its worldwide availability today via digital and electronic media, the Bible has registered an unparalleled history. Rodney Stark, Distinguished Professor of the Social Sciences at Baylor University, recounts one portion of this history:

In about 1455 Johannes Gutenberg (1397–1468) printed the first Bible. It was soon followed by a flood of printed books, many of them Bibles, most of them religious. The invention of printing stimulated a very rapid expansion of literacy in Europe. Suddenly, people had something to read, and in their own language. Where once readers had numbered in the thousands, soon there were tens of thousands of readers, then hundreds of thousands. By 1500 at least 3 percent of Germans, about 400,000 people, could read. To serve this rapidly growing audience, printers opened shops in every sizable town. Soon peddlers traveled the countryside selling books and pamphlets, with the result that huge numbers of Europeans began not only to read the Bible for themselves but to read commentaries and tracts. Sales totals were incredibly high, given the size of the literate populations (Stark, *FGG*, 74–75).

Today, as in the time of Gutenberg, the Bible continues to surpass all other literary works in production and circulation. While we commonly hear about books on the

bestseller list, selling a few hundred thousand copies, rarely do we come across books that have sold more than a million copies. Even more rarely do we find books that have passed the ten-million mark in sales. However, the number of Bibles sold reaches into the billions, and when one considers the freely distributed copies of biblical literature, the numbers likely reach into the tens of billions. According to the United Bible Societies' 2012 statistics, in that year alone member organizations were responsible for distributing 405 million Bibles or portions thereof (of which 32.1 million were full Bibles). One interesting fact to note is that in 2012 (a year in which a record number of full Bibles was distributed), there was a dramatic increase in the distribution of Bibles or portions of the Bible in countries where persecution of Christians is widespread.

The numbers of translations of the Bible are every bit as impressive as its distribution numbers. Most books are never translated into another language. If a book is translated, it is normally published in just two or three languages at the most. Very few books are available in more than ten languages. But according to the Wycliffe Global Alliance's 2014 Scripture and Language Statistics, the

Bible or portions of it have been translated into 2,883 languages! (SLS). Although this is only about 42 per cent of the world's 6,901 known languages, these languages represent the primary vehicle of communication for about 80 per cent (5.8 billion) of the estimated 7.26 billion people worldwide. Several languages were first committed to writing solely to transmit Scripture, including Gothic, Armenian, and Georgian (SLS; USWPC). Perhaps more astounding was the work of the monk brothers, Cyril and Methodius, to create the Cyrillic alphabet in the ninth century AD; as a result, they extended the gospel message to the empire of the Moravians. This alphabet provided the basis for contemporary languages such as Russian, Ukrainian, Serbo-Croatian, and Bulgarian (Geisler and Nix, GIB, 519–522).

In addition to the printed copies of biblical literature, the Internet and digital media expose even more people to the Bible. Two examples of these are directly downloadable digital texts and audio versions of every book of the Bible. One example of a digital text is YouVersion, a Bible app that has been translated into 799 languages and downloaded over 200 million times at the time of this writing. Another example: *Faith Comes by*

DISTRIBUTION OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE

Country	Rank	2011 Distribution	2012 Distribution	% Increase
Syria	4	19,000	163,105	758%
Laos	28	7,985	20,743	159%
Iraq	3	28,518	66,175	132%
Egypt	23	2,261,236	2,824,504	25%
India	21	22,790,001	27,220,467	19%
Nigeria	10	7,695,853	8,121,452	5%

Chart information adapted from WWL; SDIPH

Hearing provides audio versions of the Bible with “Bible recordings in 915 languages spoken by nearly 6 billion people. Over 334 million people in virtually every country have been reached through our wide range of programs” (SOS).

Clearly, no other book comes even close to the Bible in its distribution and translation.

B. Unique in Its Survival and Resiliency

No other written work has been so attacked, scrutinized, and persecuted as have the canonical books of the Bible. From emperors, monarchs, and dictators who tried to destroy the words of Scripture (e.g. the persecutions under Diocletian in the fourth century, Communist Russia, and Socialist China), to intellectual attempts to discredit the content of Scripture (e.g. eighteenth to nineteenth century rationalism and twenty-first-century postmodernism), the Bible has withstood all forms of opposition.

1. Through Persecution

Two examples of attempts to destroy the Bible, one ancient and one recent, demonstrate the ferocity of Christianity’s opponents. Rochunga Pudaite, founder of Bibles For The World, highlights the extreme measures to which some societies will go:

Diocletian became Caesar in the year 284. For the first 19 years of his reign Christians had rest from persecution. . . . Then, under the influence of his cruel son-in-law, Diocletian issued four harsh edicts. The first called for the destruction of all places of Christian worship and the burning of all Christian books. This order also stripped Christians of all honors and civic rights. The second called for the imprisonment in chains of pastors and church officers. The third, issued on the eve of Diocletian’s 20th anniversary as emperor, offered a cruel kind

of amnesty. The Christian prisoners would be released if they would sacrifice to the Emperor and other Roman gods. The fourth, issued in AD 304, ordered every person in the Empire to sacrifice and make offerings to heathen gods, or suffer torture and death. Churches were destroyed all over the Empire. All Bibles and writings of the church fathers that could be found were burned in public gatherings. Christian men, women, and children were tortured, thrown to wild beasts, and burned to death. Diocletian had a monument erected at the site of one Bible burning, bearing the inscription, *Extincto nomine Christianorum*—“Extinct is the Name of Christians.” . . .

Communism came to dwarf all other foes of the Bible. Lenin and Marx both predicted that the Bible would become only a relic in a new classless, atheistic society. Adjoining countries were annexed into the Soviet Empire, religious freedom denied, missionaries banished, Bibles confiscated, and churches turned into museums or closed. Millions of citizens, including many Christians, died in Stalinistic blood purges in the 1920s and ’30s. In village after village, residents were called to mass meetings and asked, “Are you with the Marxists or the believers?” Those who said “believers” were shoved into cattle cars for shipment to Siberia. . . . Millions perished in Communist countries other than the Soviet Union. Here too, Bibles were destroyed. It was a rerun of the hate-filled persecutions under the old Roman emperors, except that many, many more have died for the Christian faith and an authoritative Bible in the 20th century than in all of the bloody vendettas by the Caesars of Imperial Rome (Pudaite and Hefley, *GBEW*, 47–48, 55–56).

Other examples of persecution could be cited from history to document the persistent antagonism against the Bible, yet there is no indication that the desire for or distribution

of the Bible is waning (see Section III. A. above). However, the greatest current threat to the Bible is the intellectual challenge to its content and relevance.

2. Through Criticism

In spite of the intellectual scepticism that began to spread in the seventeenth century and still permeates culture today, the Bible (and its view of reality) continues to be as intellectually viable now as during the time of its composition. Bernard Ramm, former professor of religion at Baylor University, highlights the resiliency of the Bible in the face of rampant criticism:

A thousand times over, the death knell of the Bible has been sounded, the funeral procession formed, the inscription cut on the tombstone, and the committal read. But somehow the corpse never stays put. No other book has been so chopped, knived, sifted, scrutinized, and vilified. What book on philosophy or religion or psychology or *belles lettres* of classical or modern times has been subject to such a mass attack as the Bible? with such venom and skepticism? with such thoroughness and erudition? upon every chapter, line and tenet? (Ramm, PCE, 232–233).

The Bible has not only withstood these attacks from a sceptical world, but the Christian worldview that it champions has experienced a revitalization in recent years through a resurgence of scholarship in various disciplines, such as textual criticism, archaeology, anthropology, the natural sciences, and philosophy.

C. Unique in Its Impact on Western Civilization

No other book has influenced western civilization as much as the Bible. From its

historical narratives, moral teachings, and existential claims, the Bible has laid the groundwork for democratic forms of government and law, the rational exploration of the natural world, movements in both art and literature, societal morals and values. Pudaite provides a sampling of the areas that have been affected by the Bible:

Almost all of the good things of life that we take for granted bear the stamp of the Bible's influence—marriage, family, names, calendar, institutions of caring, social agencies, education, benefits from science, uplifting books, magnificent works of art and music, freedom, justice, equal rights, the work ethic, the virtues of self-reliance and self-discipline (Pudaite and Hefley, GBEW, 114).

1. Government and Law

In the area of human governance and law, the Bible has contributed significantly to three developments that have shaped the consciousness and conscience of western civilization: (1) individual autonomy and the democratic process, (2) a separation of secular government from the religious institution, and (3) the maintaining of a system of justice. Ronald J. Sider, Distinguished Professor of Theology at Eastern University, highlights basic biblical principles that have become normative assumptions within democratic societies, showing how the biblical understanding of human nature is determinative in establishing societies that are appropriately free for the individual and that protect against totalitarian overreach:

This biblical story shapes the Christian approach to public life in profound ways. For example, persons are not merely complex machines to be programmed for the good of the state. They are immeasurably valuable

beings, so loved by their Creator that he suffered the hell of Roman crucifixion for them, free beings called to shape history along with God and neighbor, immortal beings whose ultimate destiny far transcends any passing political system. Public life is important because it shapes the social context in which people respond to God's invitation to live in right relationship with both himself and neighbor. . . . Probably the best protection against political totalitarianism is the recognition that the state is not the ultimate source of value and law. If people in a society believe strongly that there exists a higher law grounded in God the Creator to which current legislation ought to conform and which citizens ought to obey even if that entails civil disobedience, totalitarianism will be held in check. . . . Decentralized decision making, even if it means a certain loss of efficiency, is in keeping with the biblical vision of persons as coshapers under God of their own history. . . . The democratic political process . . . is the political system most compatible with biblical values about the importance of the individual and the pervasiveness of sin. Genuine political democracy decentralizes political power more completely than any other form of government. As Reinhold Niebuhr never tired of pointing out, democracy is necessary precisely because people are sinful. At the same time, it is because each individual is of inestimable worth to God that every person should be free to help shape his or her political destiny. . . . The state should not promote or establish any religion or denomination. Nor is the separation of church and state merely a pragmatic necessity in a pluralistic society. Religious faith by its very nature is a free response to God. It cannot be coerced. Throughout biblical history, we see a sovereign God constantly inviting persons into free dialogue with himself. He invites obedience but is astonishingly patient

with those who decline the invitation. If the history of Israel tells us anything, it discloses how much space God gives people to reject his will and still continue to enjoy the created gifts of food, health, and life. Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24ff.) makes it clear that God chooses to allow believers and nonbelievers to live and enjoy the world together until the end of history. Since God intends history to be the place where people have the freedom to respond or not respond to him, the state should not promote or hinder religious belief (Sider, *EVAD*, 38, 41–43).

The Bible has also informed both the substance and framework of modern legal structures. Steve Jeffery, Michael Ovey, and Andrew Sach demonstrate how the biblical principle of retributive justice is still the only form of jurisprudence that is truly “just”:

The principle of retribution guarantees that only *guilty* people are punished. Retribution is based on the premise that the appropriate authority should impose a punishment if, and only if, an offence has actually been committed. Retribution therefore ensures that no one is punished if he or she does not *deserve* it. Similarly, the principle of retribution also ensures a given punishment is *proportional* to its crime. It recognizes that serious crimes deserve severe punishments, whereas more trivial offences warrant milder sanctions. Finally, the principle of retribution also safeguards the principle of *equity*, for the only factors allowed to affect the severity of a punishment are those that affect the nature of the crime. Irrelevant differences such as the race, gender or social class of the offender should have no impact on sentencing. It is clear, therefore, that the principle of retribution secures those elements of a system of punishment both required by Scripture and

in accord with our natural sense of right and wrong. Retribution may be combined with the elements of deterrence or correction, but by itself safeguards these biblical principles (Jeffery et al., POT, 256).

While the quotation above explains the principle of retribution, we acknowledge that human error may fail to administer it accurately. Though space limitations do not allow us to describe the intrinsic flaws of other legal theories, we can safely say that alternative theories have often led to gross abuses.

Finally, Barbara Armacost and Peter Enns, in their close examination of the biblical prophets, describe the context within which this system of retributive justice should work:

First, biblical justice is procedural as well as substantive. It requires fair and unbiased adjudication as well as fair and principled laws. Second, justice is largely relational and has particular claims on those who are in positions of power or authority over others. Third, biblical justice requires special attention to the way laws and legal institutions treat the most vulnerable individuals in our communities. Fourth, there is a sense in which modern lawyers should see themselves as having a prophetic role in their communities, either as insiders working for justice in law and legal institutions or as outsiders who bring to light injustice and call for its eradication (Armacost and Enns, COJ, 134–135).

2. Science and Education

In his sobering essay on how monotheism affected the shape of western civilization, Stark effectively counters many revisionist narratives that have become popular in contemporary culture. One of the biggest myths that Stark exposes is the inflated, if not totally fabricated, idea that religion (particularly

Christianity) was somehow an obstacle to, rather than a catalyst for, the advent of science and the rise of higher education:

There was no “scientific revolution” that finally burst through the superstitious barriers of faith, but that the flowering of science that took place in the sixteenth century was the normal, gradual, and direct outgrowth of Scholasticism and the medieval universities. Indeed, theological assumptions unique to Christianity explain why science was born only in Christian Europe. Contrary to the received wisdom, religion and science not only were compatible; they were inseparable. . . . The reason we didn’t know the truth concerning these matters is that the claim of an inevitable and bitter warfare between religion and science has, for more than three centuries, been the primary polemical device used in the atheist attack on faith. From Thomas Hobbes through Carl Sagan and Richard Dawkins, false claims about religion and science have been used as weapons in the battle to “free” the human mind from the “fetters of faith”. . . . I argue not only that there is no inherent conflict between religion and science, but that *Christian theology was essential for the rise of science* (Stark, FGG, 3, 123).

Stark summarizes the reasons for the truth of this thesis (the italicized portion above):

Christianity depicted God as a rational, responsive, dependable, and omnipotent being and the universe as his personal creation, thus having a rational, lawful, stable structure, awaiting human comprehension. . . . The rise of science was not an extension of classical learning. It was the natural outgrowth of Christian doctrine: Nature exists because it was created by God. To love and honor God, one must fully appreciate the wonders of his

handiwork. Moreover, because God is perfect, his handiwork functions in accord with *immutable principles*. By the full use of our God-given powers of reason and observation, we ought to be able to discover these principles (Stark, FGG, 157).

Both the understanding of a rational Creator of the universe and the inseparability of Christian theism from scientific truths led Sir Isaac Newton to ground his views of absolute time and space on the eternity and omnipresence of God. In his *Principia*, Newton states:

The supreme God is an eternal, infinite, and absolutely perfect being . . . , He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient, that is, he endures from eternity to eternity, and he is present from infinity to infinity; he rules all things, and he knows all things that happen or can happen. He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration and space, but he endures and is present. He endures always and is present everywhere, and by existing always and everywhere he constitutes duration and space. Since each and every particle of space is *always*, and each and every indivisible moment of duration is *everywhere*, certainly the maker and lord of all things will not be *never* or *nowhere*. . . . It is agreed that the supreme God necessarily exists, and by the same necessity he is *always* and *everywhere* (Newton, INPW, 111–112).

Finally, Stark illustrates that Christian theism provided the proper context for the flourishing of science and the humanities:

The university was a Christian invention that evolved from cathedral schools established to train monks and priests. The first two universities appeared in Paris (where both Albertus

Magnus and Thomas Aquinas taught) and Bologna, in the middle of the twelfth century. Oxford and Cambridge were founded around 1200, and then came a flood of new institutions during the remainder of the thirteenth century. . . . The university was something new under the sun—an institution devoted exclusively to “higher learning”. It was not a monastery or place for meditation. . . . The medieval universities were unlike Chinese academies for training Mandarins or a Zen master’s school. They were not primarily concerned with imparting the received wisdom. Rather, just as is the case today, faculty gained fame and invitations to join faculties elsewhere by *innovation* (Stark, FGG, 62–63).

3. Art, Literature, and Music

The Bible has been a fundamental source for nearly every genre of art and literature, and has provided inspiration for innumerable visionaries who have elevated the artistic endeavour to its highest form. Pudaite provides some examples of areas in which the Bible has left its mark on the arts:

Since the beginning of the Christian era, the Bible has inspired great works of art. The frescoes of the Roman catacombs reveal Biblical concepts of faith and hope. When Christianity became a legal religion in the Roman Empire, Christian art blossomed in the churches and on monuments. Through the 19th century, the greatest sculptures and paintings were based on characters or incidents in the Bible. The greatest artists—Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, and others—are most remembered and appreciated for their biblical masterpieces (Pudaite and Hefley, GBEW, 123).

T. R. Henn, former president of St. Catharine’s College, Cambridge, distinguishes the Bible from all other great works

of antiquity and shows the Bible's formational impact on the literature of the western world:

As "literature" it [the Bible] is, in many ways, remote from our present consciousness. There is no single work of comparable quality and intention (still less of current availability) with which we may compare it. We may read the Koran, or the Granth Sahib, the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, the Epic of Gilgamesh, the Babylonian Epic of Creation, the Law Code of Hammurabi; and these, together with various anthologies, provide some material for comparisons, throw some oblique and broken light; but little more. In its range, its unity, its diversity, its two major symphonic movements of promise and fulfilment, in its avoidance (in general) of arid and now pointless narrative or gnomic reflections that are of little relevance to the West, the Bible is unique. . . . How far, then, can the Bible be considered as literature, in any coherent sense? It is clear that it has been burned deeply into the fabric of the life and literature of the English-speaking peoples. . . . Its proverbs and its parables, its episodes sacred or profane, have been expounded in drama and poetry from the earliest written English. It has supplied the themes or framework for epic, satire, tragedy, comedy, farce, ballet; above all, its dramatic and choric potential make it specially suitable for oratorio. It has furnished allusions or depth-images to an incalculably great mass of writing. Its rhythms have been engrafted historically into much of our prose (Henn, BAL, 21, 9–10).

Chase further emphasizes how the Bible has impacted some of history's greatest minds:

The language of the Bible, now simple and direct in its homely vigour, now sonorous and

stately in its richness, has placed its indelible stamp upon our best writers from Bacon to Lincoln and even to the present day. Without it there would be no *Paradise Lost*, no *Samson Agonistes*, no *Pilgrim's Progress*; no William Blake, or Whittier, or T. S. Eliot as we know them; no Emerson or Thoreau, no negro Spirituals, no Address at Gettysburg. Without it the words of Burke and Washington, Patrick Henry and Winston Churchill would miss alike their eloquence and their meaning. Without a knowledge of it the best of our literature remains obscure, and many of the characteristic features and qualities of our spoken language are threatened with extinction (Chase, BCR, 9).

Pudaite illustrates how the Bible has affected some of the greatest musical composers:

The creators of the greatest oratorios, anthems, symphonies, hymns, and other classics were inspired by the Bible. Bach's "Jesus Joy of Man's Desiring", Mendelssohn's "Elijah", Handel's "Messiah", Brahms's "Requiem", Beethoven's "Mount of Olives", and Haydn's "Creation" are some of the best known works inspired by the Bible. After hearing his magnificent work, Haydn said, "Not I, but a power from above created that." Bach often wrote I.N.J. for the Latin words meaning "In the Name of Jesus" on his manuscripts (Pudaite and Hefley, GBEW, 123).

Influential theologian, philosopher, and author Francis Schaeffer provides even greater insight into how the Bible influenced the work of a genius like Bach:

His music was a direct result of the Reformation culture and the biblical Christianity of the time, which was so much a part of Bach himself. There would have been no Bach had

there been no Luther. . . . It was appropriate that the last thing Bach the Christian wrote was “Before Thy Throne I Now Appear.” Bach consciously related both the form and the words of his music to biblical truth. . . . This rested on the fact that the Bible gives unity to the universal and the particulars, and therefore the particulars have meaning. Expressed musically, there can be endless variety and diversity without chaos. There is variety yet resolution (Schaeffer, HSWTL, 92).

fact that was conveniently “lost” from history until recently. Finally, the abolition of New World slavery was initiated and achieved by Christian activists (Stark, FGG, 291).

There are many more examples of when, where, and how the Bible has positively impacted the course of human events and thinking, but these few seem sufficient to establish the unique presence that the Bible commands in our world today.

4. Societal Norms and Values

The Bible has shaped social morality more than any other book. One glaring example where a biblically informed Christianity drastically changed a commonly held societal norm that has existed in nearly every culture throughout history is that of slavery. Stark illustrates how Christian theology, grounded in biblical principles, led fervent believers to the conclusion that slavery was morally reprehensible and therefore required organized action:

Of all the world’s religions, including the three great monotheisms, only in Christianity did the idea develop that slavery was sinful and must be abolished. Although it has been fashionable to deny it, antislavery doctrines began to appear in Christian theology soon after the decline of Rome and were accompanied by the eventual disappearance of slavery in all but the fringes of Christian Europe. When Europeans subsequently instituted slavery in the New World, they did so over strenuous papal opposition, a

IV. Concluding Remarks

At the time of this writing, a new museum is being constructed at a cost of £750 million in the heart of Washington, D.C. dedicated to making accessible to the public the text, history, and legacy of the Bible. This museum will house more than forty thousand artifacts that relate to both the history told in the Bible and the history of the Bible itself. While neither this chapter nor this 430,000-square-foot museum in any way proves the claims of the Bible or certain doctrines concerning the Bible (e.g. inspiration and inerrancy), they certainly underscore the conclusion that the Bible is a central piece of humanity’s shared history and that it is worthy of continued investigation, critical engagement, and appreciation. Indeed, anyone sincerely seeking truth would consider the ongoing impact of a book that, although it reached completion nearly 2,000 years ago, continues to have a range of appeal and influence that is unique.