

People who diminish the Bible's significance with such claims, that it just one holy book among many other equally interesting holy books, are the naïve ones, not those who profess the Bible's significance. Those who diminish the Bible have no sound sense of the Bible's extraordinary nature nor its unprecedented impact. The Bible is not just humankind's forever-preeminent writing, one that no other writing stands any chance of ever surpassing. The Bible is also the historical account of God's action in his universe, from creation to redemption, start to finish, past, present, and future. Yet the Bible is above all the spiritual account of God's character together with his plan and purpose for humankind. Whether one believes that the Bible is accurate to any degree or not, no other writing will ever be anything like it.

First consider the Bible's unprecedented record as a writing, simply as literature, if you will. At about four billion Bible copies in the past fifty years, no other book approaches the number printed, distributed, sold, or read—not even close. What is humankind's most widely read book, with no present or future prospect for any challengers? The Bible. Good marketing doesn't do that. The Bible has unique character, utility, impact, and relevance. What has been the Bible's impact? As many as 2.2 to 2.4 billion people worldwide are Christian, approximately one third of the world's population. Readers worldwide have voted, and the outcome is no contest. The Bible is the world's greatest literary achievement, attracting in droves readers of every age and culture, and not just to read the Bible but to name themselves as adherents to its Christian faith.

The Bible is also unprecedented in its creation. The Bible took thirty-five to forty authors from three continents as much as two-thousand years to write. The Bible's oldest book Job may be as old as about four-thousand years. Its New Testament is two-thousand years old. The oldest book Job, an exquisite epic poem having still-famous lines, is well over a thousand years older than Homer's celebrated ancient epic poems the Iliad and the Odyssey. Authors wrote Bible books from palaces to temples to wildernesses to caves to prisons. They wrote under arrest, in hiding, at war, in love, while mourning, in visions, in despair, under siege, and in exile.

The Bible's sixty-six books comprise over a thousand chapters, on a thousand pages, composed of about three-quarters of a million words. Yet the Bible gives an integrated account, its many authors somehow writing innumerable connections and cross-references across its pages. The book's first great part, the Old Testament, foreshadows throughout the book's second and last great part, the New Testament. Old Testament authors somehow predicted events with virtual pinpoint accuracy that would not occur until a thousand years later, under circumstances that did not then exist and no one would have imagined.

The Bible is also unprecedented in its variety. The Bible's sixty-six books take the form of histories, genealogies, laws, poetry, prophecy, songs, lessons, letters, and wild-sounding allegory. The histories run the spectrum from the universe's creation and conclusion, to international affairs, national courses, regional events, tribal affairs, family affairs, and intensely personal experiences. The poetry is equally broad in subject. The prophecy looks forward through the ages to foretell everything from grand movements to seemingly inconsequential but somehow extraordinarily significant details. The laws, regulations, lessons, doctrines, principles, parables, and proverbs address the widest variety of common and spiritual concerns. The allegory is surreal, apocalyptic, cataclysmic, and spectacular.

The Bible is such a wondrous record because it had the most-wondrous author. While dozens of human authors recorded the Bible's many books, they each had the Holy Spirit guiding and informing them on what to write. One could think of it as God dictating the writing to his scribes. Indeed, God speaks in first person in many places in the Bible, while also speaking through the Bible's characters and events. Because God spoke to the scribes who recorded the Bible, the Bible reveals things of God that no one would otherwise know. The Bible reveals God's plan not only in long-ago events but for now, for you, and for the future, indeed for the world's end and to eternity.

No other writing attempts anything like the Bible's span, historicity, or significance. If the Bible were a complete fabrication, a work solely of fiction, then it would still be of the highest imagination, the greatest art. If the Bible were solely a historical account rather than primarily God's revelation, then historians would still treasure

it. If Satan destroyed every Bible in the world, then gathering Jews and Christians would promptly reproduce its thousand pages verbatim, from memory. Many have given their lives to read, copy, translate, publish, print, distribute, and save the Bible, when its enemies banned it. Many still give their lives for it, at the murderous hands of dictators and terrorists who hate the freedom that it offers.

Oh, yes, the Bible is special, in one sense as special as the God who wrote and inhabits it. God named his Son Jesus Christ the Word incarnate. Because Christ is the Word, the Bible that records his life and carries his words is indeed special. Christians throughout the world and throughout the ages rightly revere it. Nothing else in text or life approaches it.