A Sermon by R. A. Torrey Sr.

Some Reasons Why I Believe The Bible To Be The Word of God

Is the Bible the Word of God? If the Bible is the Word of God, an absolutely trustworthy revelation from God Himself, of Himself, His purposes and His will, of man's duty and destiny, of spiritual and eternal realities, then we have a starting point from which we can proceed to the conquest of the whole domain of religious truth. But if the Bible is not the Word of God, if it is the mere product of man's thinking, speculating, and guessing, not altogether trustworthy in regard to religious and eternal truth, then we are all "at sea," not knowing wither we are drifting, but we may be sure that we are not drifting toward any safe port.

I did not always believe the Bible to be the Word of God. I sincerely doubted that the Bible was the Word of God. I doubted that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. I doubted whether there was a personal God. I was not an infidel. I was a skeptic. I did not deny. I questioned. I was not an atheist. I was an agnostic. I did not know but I determined to find out. If there was a God, I determined to find that out and act accordingly. If there was not a God, I determined to find that out and act accordingly. If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, I determined to find that out and act accordingly. If Jesus Christ was not the Son of God, I determined to find that out and act accordingly. If the Bible was the Word of God, I determined to find that out and act accordingly. And if the Bible was not the Word of God, I determined to find that out and act accordingly. I found out. I found out beyond the peradventure that there is a God, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, that the Bible is the Word of God. Today it's with me not a matter of mere probability nor even of mere belief, but of absolute certainty.

I'm going to give you some of the reasons why I believe the Bible to be the Word of God. Not all the reasons. It would take months to do that. Not even the reasons which are the most conclusive to me, personally, for these are of such a personal and experimental character that they cannot be conveyed to another. But I will give you reasons that will prove conclusive to any candid seeker after the truth, to anyone who desires to know the truth and is willing to obey it. They will not convince one who is determined not to know the truth or who is unwilling to obey it. If one will not receive the love of the truth, he must be left to his own deliberate choice of error and given over to strong delusions, who believe a lie. But if one is searching for the truth, no matter how completely he's in the fog today, he can be led into the truth.

I believe the Bible to be the Word of God first of all because of the testimony of Jesus Christ to that fact. We live in a day that many men say that they accept the teaching of Jesus Christ, but that they do not accept the teaching of the whole Bible. They say that they believe what Jesus Christ says, but as to what Moses said or is said to have said and what Isaiah said or is said to of said and what Jeremiah said and Paul said and John said and the rest of the Bible writers, they...they do not know about that.

Now this position may at the first glance seem rational but in point of fact it is utterly irrational. If we accept the teaching of Jesus Christ we must accept the whole Bible, for Jesus Christ has set his stamp of his authority upon the entire book. And if we accept his authority we must accept all that upon which he set the stamp of his authority.

As to Christ's endorsement of the Old Testament, turn first of all to Mark 7:13. Jesus has just quoted from the law of Moses. Not merely from the Ten Commandments, but from other portions of the law of Moses as well. He has set over against the teaching of the law of Moses the traditions of the Pharisees and Scribes. And in this verse he says "Ye do make the Word of God of none effect through your tradition." Now here he distinctly calls the law of Moses, "the Word of God." It is often times said that the Bible nowhere claims to be the Word of God. Why, here Jesus Christ himself distinctly asserts that the law of Moses is the Word of God. If then we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we must accept the law of Moses as the Word of God. Of course this only covers the first five books of the Old Testament. But if we can accept this as the Word of God, we will have little difficulty with the rest of the Old Testament, for it is here that the hottest battle is being fought today. Turn again to Matthew 5:18. Here Jesus says "Till heaven and earth pass away, jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law until all be fulfilled." Now every Hebrew scholar knows that a jot is the Hebrew character "yodh" the smallest character in the Hebrew alphabet, less than half the size of any other character in the Hebrew alphabet. And that a tittle is a little horn that the Hebrews put on their consonants. And here Jesus asserts

that the law of Moses as originally given is absolutely infallible down to its smallest letter and part of a letter. If, then, we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we must accept the authority of the law of Moses as originally given. And as contained in the Old Testament Scriptures.

Turn next to John 10:35. Jesus has just quoted in proof of a point which he is making from one of the Psalms and adds, "the Scripture cannot be broken," thus setting the stamp of his authority on the absolute irrafragaibility of the Old Testament Scriptures.

Turn again to Luke 24:27. And you will read that, "Jesus, beginning at Moses and all the prophets, expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." And in the 44th verse he says, "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms." Now every scholar knows that the Jews divided their Bible (our present Old Testament Scriptures) into three parts: the Law, the first five books of the Old Testament, the Prophets (most of the books which we call prophetic and some of those which we call historical), and the remaining books of the Old Testament (the Psalms or sacred writings). Jesus Christ takes up each one of these three recognized divisions of these Old Testament Scriptures and sets the stamp of his authority upon each one of them. If, then, we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we are driven logically to accept the entire Old Testament Scriptures.

In Luke 16:31 Jesus says "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one be raised from the dead." Thus in the most emphatic way endorsing the truth of the Old Testament Scriptures. In John 5:47 Jesus says "If ye believe not his writings," (Moses writings), "how shall you believe my word," thus setting the stamp of his authority upon the teaching of Moses as being as truly from God as was his own. We must then if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ accept the entire Old Testament.

But how about the New Testament? Did Jesus set the stamp of his authority on it also? He did. But how could he when not a book of the New Testament was written when he departed from this earth? He did it by way of anticipation.

Turn to John 14:26 and you will hear Jesus saying "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you," thus setting the stamp of his authority not only upon the apostolic teaching as given by the Holy Spirit but upon the apostolic recollection of what he himself had taught.

The question is often asked, "How do we know that in the Gospel records we have an accurate reproduction of the teaching of Jesus Christ?" It is asked, did

the apostles take notes at the time of what Jesus said? There is reason to believe that they did, that Matthew and Peter, from whom Mark derived his material, and James, from whom there is reason to believe Luke obtained much of his material, took notes of what Jesus said in Aramaic and that John took notes of what Jesus said in Greek and that we have in the four Gospels the report of what they took down at the time.

But whether this be true or not does not matter for our present purposes. For we have Christ's own authority for it that in the apostolic record we have not the apostles recollection of what Jesus said, but the Holy Spirit's recollection of what Jesus said. And while the apostles might forget and report inaccurately, the Holy Spirit could not forget.

Turn furthermore to John 16:12 and 13 and you will hear Jesus saying "I have yet many things to say unto you but you cannot bear them now. Albeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth." Here Jesus sets the stamp of his authority on the teaching of the apostles as being given by the Holy Spirit, as containing all the truth and as containing more truth than his own teaching. He tells the apostles that he has many things that he knows to tell them but that they are not ready yet to receive them. But that when the Holy Spirit comes he will guide them into this fuller and larger truth. If then we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we must accept the apostolic teaching, the New Testament writings, as being given through the Holy Spirit, as containing all the truth, and as containing more truth than Jesus taught while on earth.

There are many in our day who cry "back to Christ...back to Christ," by which they usually mean we do not care what Paul taught or what John taught or what James taught or what Jude taught. We do not know about them. Let us go back to Christ, the original source of authority, and accept what he taught and that alone.

Very well. Back to Christ. The cry is not a bad one. But when you get back to Christ you hear Christ himself saying, "On to the apostles. They have more truth to teach than I have taught. The Holy Spirit has taught them all the truth. Listen to them." If then we accept the authority of Jesus Christ we are driven to accept the authority of the entire New Testament. So then if we accept the teaching of Jesus Christ, we must accept the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament. It is either Christ and the whole Bible, or no Bible and no Christ.

There are some in these days who say that they believe in Christ, but not in the Christ of the New Testament. But there is no Christ but the Christ of the New Testament. Any other Christ than the Christ of the New Testament is a poor figment of the imagination. Any other Christ than the Christ of the New Testament is an idol made by man's own fancy and whoever worships him is an

idolater. But we must accept the authority of Jesus Christ. He is accredited to us by five unmistakable divine testimonies.

First, Christ is accredited to us by the testimony of the divine life that he lived, for he lived as never man lived. Let any man takes the four Gospels for himself and reads them carefully and candidly. He will soon be convinced of two things. First, that he's reading the story of a life actually lived. No man could have imagined the character there set forth unless the life had been actually lived. Much less could four men have imagined the character, each one of the four making his own account of that character, not only consistent with himself, but consistent with the other three. To suppose that these four men who wrote the Gospels imagined the life here set forth would be to suppose a greater miracle than any recorded in the Gospels.

You will see in the second place that the life here set forth is apart from all other human lives, that is stands by itself, that it is manifestly a divine life lived under human conditions. Napoleon Bonaparte was a good judge of men. He once said regarding the life of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels and which he have been reading, "I know men and Jesus Christ was not a man." What he meant was, of course, that Jesus Christ was not a mere man.

Secondly Jesus Christ is accredited to us by the divine words that he spoke. If anyone will study the teaching of Jesus Christ with candor and faithfulness, he will soon see that it has a character that distinguishes it from all other teachings ever uttered upon the earth.

Third, Jesus Christ was accredited to us by the divine works that he wrought. Not only did he heal the sick, which many others have done, but cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, healing the tempest by a word, turning water into wine, and feeding five thousand with five small loaves and two small fishes, which was a creative act. These miracles of power are clear credentials of God come to teach. We cannot study them tangibly and not come to the same conclusion as Nicodemus did. "We know that thou are the teacher come from God, for no man can do these kinds that thou doest except God be with him."

Of course we bear in mind the fact that strenuous efforts have been made to eliminate the supernatural elements from the story of the life of Jesus Christ. But all these efforts have resulted in failure. And all similar efforts must result in failure. One of the most able efforts of this kind that was ever made was that of the great German theologian David Strauss in his *Leben Jesu*. David Strauss was a man of remarkable ability and gifts, a man of real and profound scholarship, a man of notable genuis, a man of singular power of critical analysis, aman of indomitable perseverance and untiring industry. He brought to bare all the rare

gifts of his richly endowed mind upon the story of the life of Jesus. With a determination to discredit the miraculous element therein contained. He spent his best years and strength in this effort. If anyone could have succeeded in such an effort. David Strauss was the man. But he failed utterly. For a time it seemed to many that he had succeeded in his purpose. But when his life of Jesus was itself submitted to rigid critical analysis it fell all to pieces and today is utterly discredited. And those who wish to eliminate the miraculous element in the story of Jesus feel that they must make the attempt anew, since the attempt of Strauss has come to nothing.

Where Strauss failed, the French writer Ernest Renan tried again. He had not by any means the ability and genius of Strauss. But he was man of brilliant genius and supple imagination, of rare literary skills and of singular adroitness and finesse. His *La Vie de Jesus* was read with interest and admiration by many. The work was done with fascinating skill. Some fancied that Renan had succeeded in his attempt. But his life of Jesus, naturally enough, was discredited even in a shorter time than that of Strauss.

All other attempts have met with a similar fate. It is an attempt at the impossible. Let any candid man take the life of Jesus and read it for himself with attention and care, and he will soon discover that the life there pictured could not have been imagined but must have been really lived. If the teachings reported as uttered by Jesus are no fictitious teachings put into the mouth of a fictitious person, but the real utterances of a real person.

He will also discover that the character and teaching set forth in the Gospels are inexplicably interwoven with the stories of the miracles. He will find that if you eliminate the miracles, the character and the teachings disappear, that the character and teachings cannot be separated from the miraculous element without a violent of treatment which no reasonable man will permit.

Today this much at least is proven. That Jesus lived and walked substantially as is recorded in the four Gospel records of his life. Personally, I believe that more than this is proven. But this is enough for our present purpose. If Jesus lived and walked substantially as the Gospels record - cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind, raising the dead, stilling the tempest with his word, feeding the five thousand with the five small loaves and the two small fishes - then he bears unmistakable credentials as God come forth to teach.

Fourth Jesus Christ is also accredited to us by his divine influence upon all subsequent history. Jesus Christ was beyond peradventure one of three things. He was either the son of God in a unique sense, a divine person incarnate in human form or else he was the most daring imposter that ever lived or else one of the most hopeless lunatics. That he claimed to be the son of God in a unique

sense and that all men should honor him even as they honored the Father (as he said in John 5:23) and that he and the Father were one (as he said in John 10:30) and that he that had seen him had seen the Father (as he said in John 14:9), of this there can be no honest doubt.

Jesus was then either the divine person that he claimed to be or the most daring imposter or a most hopeless lunatic. Was his influence upon subsequent history the influence of a lunatic? No one but a lunatic would say so. Was his influence upon subsequent history the influence of an imposter? No one but one whose own heart was thoroughly tainted with deceit and fraud would think of saying so.

Not an imposter. Not a lunatic. We have only one alternative left. He was what he claimed to be, the Son of God, God the Son.

Fifth, Jesus Christ is accredited to us by his resurrection from the dead. I shall hope to show you at another time the evidence for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We will see the historic evidence for the resurrection of Christ is absolutely convincing in its character, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is one of the best proven facts of history. But the resurrection of Christ is God's seal to Christ's claim.

Jesus Christ claimed to be the Son of God, God the Son. He was put to death for making that claim. Before being put to death, he said that God would set his seal to the claim by raising him from the dead. They killed him. They laid him in the sepulture. They rolled a stone to the door of the sepulture. They sealed that door with a Roman seal, which to break was death. And when the appointed hour of which Christ had spoken came, the breath of God swept through the sleeping clay. And Jesus rose triumphant over death. And God spoke more clearly than if he could speak from the open heavens today and say, "This is my beloved son. Hear ye him."

We must, then, if we are honest accept the authority of Jesus Christ. But if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ we must accept the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament as being the word of God. Therefore I believe the Bible to be the word of God because of the testimony of Jesus Christ to that effect.

A school of criticism has arisen that assumes to set up its authority against the authority of Jesus Christ. They say, for example, "Jesus says that 110th Psalm was by David and was messianic but we say that the 110th Psalm is neither by David nor is it messianic." They ask us to give up the authority and infallibility of Jesus Christ and the Bible and accept their authority and their infallibility in their place.

Very well, but before doing it we demand their credentials. We do not yield to the claim of authority and infallibility of anyone until he presents his credentials. Jesus Christ presents his credentials.

First of all he presents the credentials of the divine fact that he lived. What have they to place in comparison with that? Oh we hear much about the beauty of the life of some of the school of critics. We have no desire to deny the claim. But against the beauty of their lives we put the life of Jesus. Which suffers by the comparison? If there is any force in the argument that if a man's life is in the right his doctrine cannot be in the wrong (and there is force in the argument), it bears immeasurably more for the authority of Jesus Christ than it does for the authority of any critic or school of critics.

Second Jesus presents the credential of the divine words that he spoke. What have they to put up against that? The words of Jesus Christ have stood the test of nineteen centuries and shine out with greater luster and glory today than ever. What school of criticism has ever stood the test of nineteen centuries? If one has to choose between the teaching of Christ and that of any school of criticism, it will not take any thoroughly sane man long to choose.

Third Jesus Christ presents his third credential, the divine works that he wrought, the unmistakable seal of God upon his claim. What has the school of criticism to put up against that? Absolutely nothing. It has no miracles, but miracles of literary ingenuity in the attempt to make the preposterous appear historical.

Fourth Jesus Christ presents the credential of his influence upon human history. We all know what the influence of Jesus Christ has been, how benign and how divine. Everything that is best in modern civilization, everything that is best in national, domestic and individual life is due to the influence of Jesus Christ. Alas, we also know the influence of the school of criticism. We know that it is weakening the power of ministers and Christian workers everywhere. We know that it is emptying churches. We know that is depleting missionary treasuries. We know that it is paralyzing missionary efforts in every field where it has gone. I know this by personal observation and not by hearsay. This may not be there intention. With some of them, it is not their intention. But none the less it is a fact. The influence of Jesus has been thoroughly beneficent . The influence of this school of criticism is utterly bad.

Fifth, Jesus presents his fifth credential, his resurrection from the dead. What has this school of criticism to set up over against that? Nothing whatever. Jesus Christ established his claim. The opposing school of criticism stands dumb. Therefore we refuse to bow to the assumed and unsubstantiated authority and infallibility of any school of criticism, of any priest or pope or theological professor. But most gladly do we...do we bow to the authority and infallibility of

Jesus Christ. So completely proven and upon his authority, we accept the entire Old Testament and the entire New Testament as the Word of God.

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Last Revised: 6/21/04
Last Revised: 1/5/05
Expiration: indefinite

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