

The Bible

Why trust the Bible?
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SCM

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The Bible consists of many books, of varying genres, written, rewritten, and amended by different people living in different contexts at different points in history. It speaks of love, justice and peace – and yet seems to condone, even encourage, capital punishment, misogyny, homophobia, blind nationalism and a host of other evils. So how can it be authoritative? Can we recognise its diversity and questionable morality, and yet continue to give it a central place in Christian discussion and devotion? Or must we either try to ignore the difficult parts and pretend the rest speaks uniformly of whatever suits us, or dispense with the whole book and consider it nothing more than an interesting artefact?

I have come to believe that the Bible's multiple voices, far from undermining its importance, actually help to justify its prominence in the Christian faith. For through them we discover the story of an authentic relationship between God and humanity, one which is not all sweet agreement, but which encompasses everything from the deepest anger and doubt to the most sincere forgiveness and reconciliation. In the Bible's pages, we read of countless people caught in the complexity that is real life. Sometimes, like us, they are unsure who God is, or what they should do, sometimes everything does go horribly wrong, but nonetheless they persist in their conviction that God is at work in their situation, guiding, loving and forgiving them despite their confusion and their failings. It is not a straightforward story, but, that, I think, is all the more reason why we should read and trust it.

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