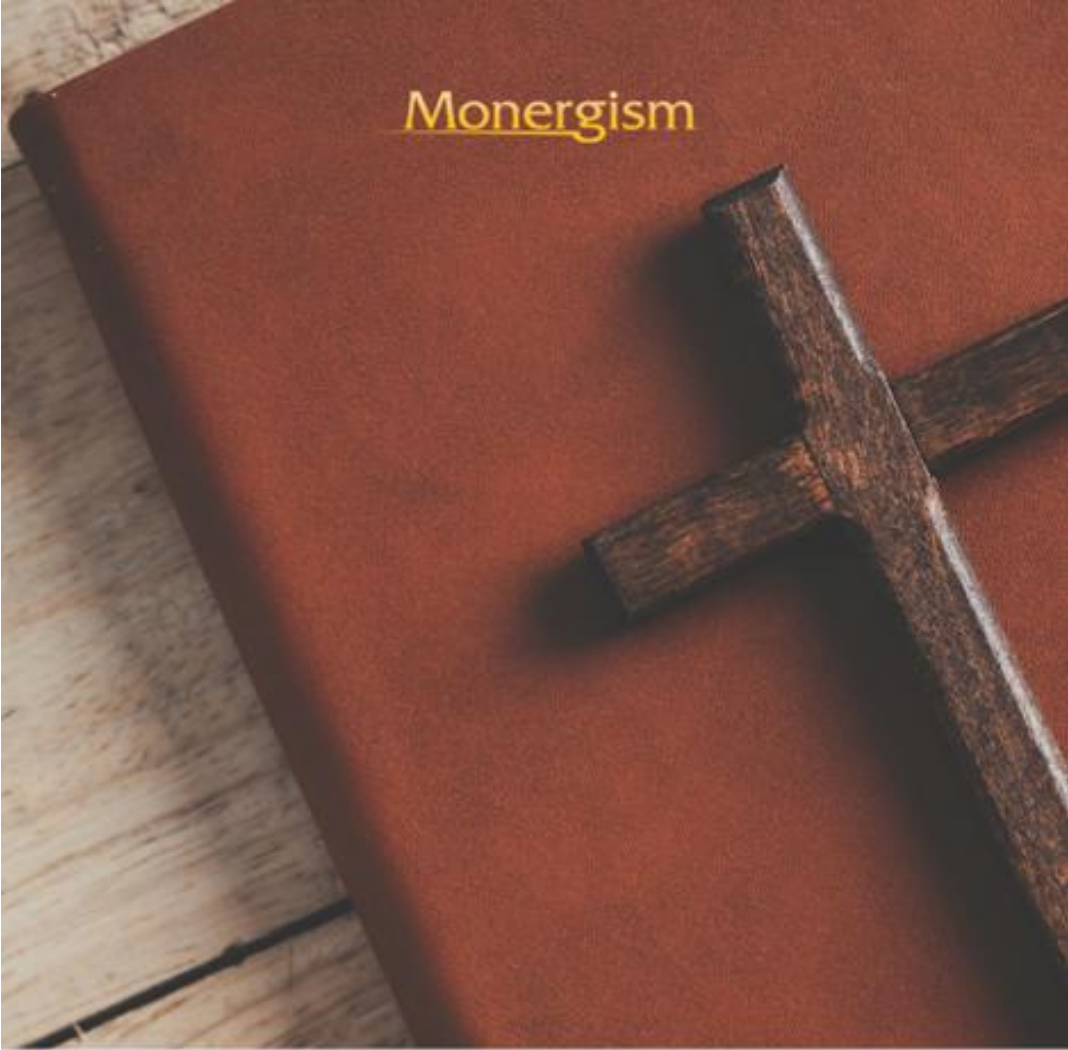


*Monergism*

**THE DIVINE ORIGIN  
OF THE BIBLE**

**B. B. WARFIELD**



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# **The Divine Origin of the Bible**

**by B. B. Warfield**

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## **Table of Contents**

[Introduction](#)

[The History of the Bible](#)

[The Structure of the Bible](#)

[The Teaching of the Bible](#)

[Special Characteristics of the Bible](#)

[Impossibility of Accounting for the Bible](#)

## **Introduction**

When the Christian asserts his faith in the divine origin of his Bible, he does not mean to deny that it was composed and written by men or that it was given by men to the world. He believes that the marks of its human origin are ineradicably stamped on every page of the whole volume. He means to state only that it is not merely human in its origin. If asked where and how the divine has entered this divine-human book, he must reply: "Everywhere, and in almost every way conceivable." Throughout the whole preparation of the material to be written and of the men to write it; throughout the whole process of the gathering and classification and use of the material by the writers; throughout the whole process of the actual writing, - he sees at work divine influences of the most varied kinds, extending all the way from simply providential superintendence and spiritual illumination to direct revelation and inspiration.

It is of great importance to distinguish between these various ways in which the divine has been active in originating the Scriptures, but it is of vastly greater importance to fix the previous fact that it is in the Scriptures at all and has entered them in any way. The present essay aims, therefore, without raising any of the many questions which concern the distinguishing of the various activities of God in originating his Scriptures, to busy itself with the one previous question: Is there reason to believe that God has been concerned at all in the origin of the Bible?

The question thus proposed is a very general one. And it is a very immense one - almost limitless. It is, of course, utterly impossible to do more than touch upon it in any reasonable space, and all that could be urged in a single paper or in any reasonably circumscribed series of papers would bear a very small proportion to all that might be urged - to the mighty case that could be made out. No attempt can be made, therefore, toward fullness of treatment. A series of propositions most baldly stated will only be laid down one after the other, and it will be left to the reader to develop and illustrate them and bring out their combined force, which will, however, it is hoped, be immediately partly evident from their simple statement. An effort

will also be made, in the choice of the propositions and their ordering, to frame an argument of a kind which will demand, as of right, entrance into every mind; one, therefore, which will depend for its force on no original assumptions, but will begin rather with simple and patent facts - will simply put these facts together and then inquire what kind of facts they are and what they imply. Thus the reasoning will take the form of an inquiry rather than an argument - of an induction rather than a demonstration. The conclusions reached may not be so sharply and accurately defined as if reached by other methods, but they have the advantage of being obtained by a process to every step of which every man's mind ought to be open.

Our purpose is to look upon the Bible simply as one of the facts of the universe, of which every theory of the universe must take account, and for which, just as surely as for gravitation, it must make account or itself die, and then ask (and press the question): What kind of a cause must be assumed to account for it just as it is and just as it arose in the world? Thus we may inductively come to an answer to the query: "Must we assume superhuman activities at work in the genesis of this book?"

Without further introduction, we begin the inquiry at once.

## **I. THE HISTORY OF THE BIBLE**

1. The basal fact from which our inquiry takes its start is the very indisputable and patent one that in the world there is such a book as **THE BIBLE**. There is a definite volume, well known and always the same in contents, about which there need be no mistake, which goes

under this name, and under this name is accessible to all. This very patent fact is the first that we need to notice.

2. It is another fact, hardly less patent than the last, that this book occupies a unique position in the world of civilized man. No other book stands to-day among men for what the Bible stands for. We are not asserting here that it has a right to the position it occupies or the power it exerts: we simply assert that it is undeniable that it holds that position and exercises that power.

The legislation of civilized nations is profoundly affected by its teaching; the social habits of cultured people are largely determined by its scheme of life; the governmental forms of powerful countries are built on its principles, and their functions are carried on under its sanctions. Rulers are entrusted with the exercise of their powers, witnesses are credited in the deposition of their testimony, only after oaths sworn upon or according to it. Everywhere it has percolated through the fabric of civilization, and modern society is built up upon the lines drawn by it.

Still further, where it most dominates, there is most life. It is the great Protestant nations - those who most rest upon this book - which are the most prominent nations, the most full of abounding life and enterprising energy, the most impressive on the destinies of man. It is even the pioneer of civilization; instead of following, it breaks the way for material advancement. Go where you will, if you find life, you will find also the Bible; and you will find it in the very midst of the organism. You will find it in the hall of legislation, and in the laws that are there framed; in the courts of justice, and in the justice that is there administered; in the colleges of learning, and in the learning that is there imparted; at the home-firesides, and in the moral training and homely virtues which are there inculcated. In a word, it is, as no other book has ever been to a single nation, bound up with all civilization and progress and culture.

3. It is worth our notice, still further, that this position of power and influence has been attained and held by the Bible through a most remarkable history. Confined for ages to a rough, isolated corner of the globe, in the keeping of a small and peculiar tribe of men, it almost without a moment's warning, like a great lake receiving a new accession of waters, immediately on completion, burst all boundaries and deluged the world. It came commended by no external pomp of appearance, attended with no force of arms. Alone and single-handed, in the face of stinging contempt and bloodthirsty cruelty, it opposed ancient prejudices, long-settled habits, customs and religions, every consideration of self-interest or indulgence or safety, and swept them away like so many straws. By its simple, despised presence among men it conquered. It mattered not where it went; human society in every stage of development, under every form of administration, and composed of every race of men, everywhere alike yielded itself to it.

We cannot overstate the case; it is even impossible for us to mentally realize the profundity of the change induced. Look only at the straws of external action which, veering suddenly around, advertise to us the change of wind beneath and behind. See the revolution in the sentiment which the sight of a cross kindled.

Who can estimate, again, the profound revolution which was necessary in men's very habits of thought, in their inmost consciousness, before sacrificial ordinances could fall into neglect. Just think of it. From the beginning of the world sacrifices had been universal. Men knew, and had from the beginning known, no other way to express the deepest facts of their consciences. The habit had been ground in upon the race not only for a lifetime, but for a world-time. Everybody everywhere spontaneously fled to this rite as the fit expression of the sense of sin and the hope of deliverance. And yet, in little more than fifty years after the introduction of Christianity into his province, Pliny complains that it had almost put a stop to sacrifices there. A world-habit, dominant from the beginning, thus rolled back upon itself in a single generation! We cannot possibly

appreciate the greatness of this conquest. Sacrifices had been almost the whole life of the people: from childhood sacrifices had met each man in every form, in every quarter, in every act, in every duty of every day's business. Not only could he not engage in any of the graver duties of the citizen without being confronted with them everywhere; he could not rise from his bed in the morning, retire to it at night, partake of his necessary sustenance, without a recognition of a god or the performance of a rite at every step. And yet Christianity came, not undermining the principle which underlay sacrifices, but emphasizing it, and still they fled away from its presence.

Beneath such external changes, conceive, if you can, the immense revolution that was wrought. Not only was the whole practice of religion altered, but also the whole theory of religion; not only the whole practice of morals, but the whole theory of morals. Vices in former repute were suddenly raised to the highest pinnacle of virtues; virtues in former repute were thrust down to the lowest hell of vices. Everything was overturned.

Is it asked whether the human means employed in gaining this grand victory were not sufficient to account for it? Look at them. A dozen ignorant peasants proclaiming a crucified Jew as the founder of a new faith; bearing as the symbol of their worship an instrument which was the sign of ignominy, slavery and crime; preaching what must have seemed an absurd doctrine of humility, patient suffering and love to enemies - graces undreamed of before; demanding what must have seemed an absurd worship for one who had died like a malefactor and a slave, and making what must have seemed an absurd promise of everlasting life through one who had himself died, and that between two thieves.

Did their voices fall on willing or docile ears? This was the age of those princes of scoffers, Celsus and Lucian.



Did they prosecute their work in peace and quietude? They were thrown to the lions until the very beasts were satiated with their prey. Their blood seemed only to water the field of the Lord.

Thus, in the face of all discouragement and cruel persecution, the Bible found itself established with incredible rapidity in the hearts of an immense Christendom. In less than seventy years it was known over all the then known world; within little more than a single century it had won to itself "almost the greater part of the whole state."

Do you say that this, despite all appearances, must have been an exceptional age and an exceptional experience? We reply that it is the experience of the ages. When corruption had brought back an age of darkness and the Bible was once more lost from real life, it required but a Luther to tear off the veil for it to re-enact the same history and sow Europe with the blood of its votaries till a harvest could be reaped of equal victory. It cannot be necessary to repeat the story of the noble conflict. You know it well, and know that it was a Bible war and a Bible victory. The same history is even now working itself out about us. Madagascar, under our eyes, has repeated it. Every corner of the globe has felt the tingling of the mighty impulse. Even here, in America, we are living amid historical wonders, our eyes unopened to the sight. Rapidly as the population of the United States has grown since 1800, the proportionate increase of the votaries of the Bible has outstripped it. Yet so quietly has it all been done that we live utterly oblivious of it until, through painfully gathered statistics, the fact is made to look us squarely in the face.

How certain a fact, then, it is that the Bible has reached its present wonderful position and influence through a most remarkable history, and a history which it is still continuing on exactly the same lines!

4. It is important to note, next, that throughout all this history, and still to-day, this great influence which the Bible has exerted has been, and is still, purely and only beneficent. All its power has been exerted

in the direction of the elevation of man and loving ministry to his needs. Of course we are in no danger of forgetting that the truth of this statement has been of late challenged in some quarters. But neither can we forget three other facts: 1. That it is not challenged by the well-informed and unprejudiced even among those who deny the divine origin of the Bible. 2. That the methods by which it is attempted to make the Bible appear in any other rôle than that of a cornucopia of good for man will (as Dr. Fisher has lately very clearly shown) avail equally to prove that love is a curse and the household fireside, with all its blessings, a very nest of corruption. Of course, it is not denied, either of love or of the Bible, that it sometimes has been the cause of pain; each has often ennobled man through the pain and self-sacrifice called out by it. Nor is it denied of either that it has been made at times the excuse of crime, but both have cried out upon the wickedness which would hide behind their sacred skirts. 3. That those who put forth the challenge have been led to do it only because the teaching of the Bible has so leavened society and the usages of modern life that it is almost impossible for men to believe that the world could ever have existed without the restraining and ennobling influences which now seem naturally to dominate us, and yet which really have their root in the Bible. A true picture of the boon which this book has really been to the world can be obtained only by an examination of two classes of facts - those belonging to the condition of society before it entered into its beneficent reign on the one hand, and on the other those belonging to the condition into which society lapses whenever the Bible in any degree loses its hold upon men. The shamelessness of Roman society under the early emperors will give us the norm of the one; the horrors of the Italian renaissance and of the French Revolution will give us the norm of the other. It is not necessary to stop now to pollute these pages with the recital of the depths of degradation from which the Bible rescued man, and from which its potent influence (witness the Italian renaissance and the Reign of Terror) alone keeps him rescued: they may be read in any accredited history of the times, and it is certainly justifiable to assume as fact what is recognized as fact by all competent historians.

Thus, then, the Bible is seen to tread the ages like the fabled goddess under whose beneficent footfall sprang beautiful flowers wherever she went. Hospitals and asylums and refuges for the sick, the miserable and the afflicted grow like heaven-bedewed blossoms in its path. Woman, whose equality with man Plato considered a sure mark of social disorganization, has been elevated; slavery has been driven from civilized ground; letters have been given by Christian missionaries, under the influence of the Bible and in order to its publication, to whole peoples and races. Who can estimate that boon? Thus Cyril and Methodius gave alphabet and written language to the vast hordes of the Slaves; thus Ulphilas, to the whole race of Teutons; thus even Egypt, mother of letters, first received a manageable alphabet. Thus still to-day tribes and peoples sunk in barbarism are being lifted by the Bible to the ranks of literary nations. So the work goes on, and still to-day, as ever before, the Bible stands in all the world exercising everywhere its immense power in the restraining of all evil passions, in the advancement of all that is good and tender and elevating, in pouring out benefits unspeakable to the individual and the state.

5. All this immense influence for good which the Bible is exercising over the minds and hearts of men is due to a most deep-seated and steadfast conviction in their minds that it is from God and constitutes a law given from heaven for amending the lives and ameliorating the condition of men.

If this be a fanaticism, it is a most beneficent and a most remarkable fanaticism, far from easy to account for on the hypothesis that it is a fanaticism. Did men rush to embrace a delusion which had nothing to commend it to them amid the scoffs of Celsus and the ridicule of Lucian, against their every interest and against their every inclination, and that when the majesty of Rome was unsheathed to fright them back and the jaws of the lions yawned to engulf them? Men do not usually spring so to die for a delusion which offers so little and threatens so much. Then, too, how has the fanaticism so grown? How is it that it still holds captive so many millions of those

whose intellect is of the clearest and whose culture is of the highest? How is it that it still embraces the civilized world? But, however it be attempted to account for it, here is the fact. The great influence which the Bible has ever exercised has been always, and still is accounted for by those who yield to it on their sincere conviction that this book, which differs so in power from all other volumes, differs from them equally in origin, being alone of books God's book, while all others are men's.

6. This conviction is traced by them not solely to the visible power and influence of the book, nor solely, conjoined with that, to the manifest grandeur and divinity of its contents and character, but also (continuing to dwell now on external particulars) to marvelous circumstances which attended the giving of this marvelous book to the world. Those who wrote its latter portion and sent the whole abroad asserted that they acted under commission from God and authenticated their mission by a series of astounding miracles. Thus the miracle of the book is appropriately believed to have sprung from the center of a God-endowed company.

We cannot pause now to prove that these miracles really occurred. All that can be said is that the testimony they rest on is irrefragable, and that they must be admitted to have occurred or the foundations of all history are swept away at a stroke. It is enough here to note how appropriately the wonderful history which has been wrought out by the Bible is made to spring from open miracles. All is here consistent and appropriate; and if those miracles which are asserted to have happened really happened, all is explained and constitutes a harmonious whole. Otherwise, we are landed in great difficulties and inconsistencies.

If we will ponder the facts which we have so baldly stated, it seems that we must conclude that the external history of this book is such as will so harmonize with a supernatural origin for it as to take away all strangeness from the assertion of such an origin. And what is that but saying that the history of the book suggests a supernatural origin

for it - even raises a presumption in favor of such an origin for it? This book is certainly unique in the power it possesses: is it not unique in its source of power? It is certainly furnished with an influence possessed by no other book. Whence came it?

## **II. THE STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE**

And now let us open the volume and see what kind of a book this is which has exerted such remarkable power through so long and so wonderful a history. We have all, doubtless, a notion of the kind of book a volume is likely to be which will exercise vast influence over men - a masterly argument, say, well ordered and set foursquare against all possible opposition, each part fitted with consummate skill to each other part, and the whole driven with relentless force and unswerving purpose straight to the intended goal; or a fervid appeal, say, based on the primal emotions of the heart, with burning and well-chosen words touching each string of that mystic harp, beating out from them all one burst of answering music. A consummate master of thought and speech may be thus conceived of as so catching the human heart as to hold it almost permanently. Yet his influence would be limited - notably, by this: the radius of the circle of his sympathies. Certainly no man has yet arisen able to frame a writing of universal and age-long influence, simply because no one has arisen yet wholly above the environment of the social customs and age-influence in which he was bred. And certainly it is inconceivable that a book should exert great influence over a wide expanse of territory and through long stretches of time which was not consciously framed for influence by an intelligent and competent mind. All this being true, it is assuredly worth our most serious attention that the Bible is the only book in existence which has any pretensions to being universal and lasting in its influence; and yet, if

it be not of superhuman origin, it could not have been framed consciously for influence. Let us look into this fact somewhat more closely.

7. On first throwing open this wonderful volume we are struck immediately with the fact that it is not a book, but rather a congeries of books. No less than sixty-six separate books, one of which consists itself of one hundred and fifty separate compositions, immediately stare us in the face. These treatises come from the hands of at least thirty distinct writers, scattered over a period of some fifteen hundred years, and embrace specimens of nearly every kind of writing known among men. Histories, codes of law, ethical maxims, philosophical treatises, discourses, dramas, songs, hymns, epics, biographies, letters both official and personal, vaticinations, - every kind of composition known beneath heaven seems gathered here in one volume.

Their writers, too, were of like diverse kinds. The time of their labors stretches from the hoary past of Egypt to and beyond the bright splendor of Rome under Augustus. They appear to have been of every sort of temperament, of every degree of endowment, of every time of life, of every grade of attainment, of every condition in the social scale. Looked at from a purely external point of view, the volume is a rough bale of drift from the sea of Time, a conglomerate of débris brought down by the waters and cast in a heap together. Nay, not only are there heterogeneous, but seemingly positively conflicting, elements in it. One half is a mass of Hebrew writings held sacred by a race which cannot look with patience on the other half, which is a mass of Greek writings claiming to set aside the legislation of a large part of its fellow. Yet it is this congeries of volumes which has had, and still has, this immense influence. The Hebrew half never conquered the world until the Greek half was added to it; the Greek half did not conquer save by the aid of the Hebrew half. The whole mass, in all its divinity, has attained the kingship.

The question which will not down is, Can the miraculous power of this book be explained by the measure of power to which other books are able to attain? Where does this book, seemingly thus cast together by some whirlpool of time, get its influence? If influence is not natural to such a volume, must it not point to something supernatural in it? Whence came it?

8. We may look, however, on a still greater wonder. Let us once penetrate beneath all this primal diversity and observe the internal character of the volume, and a most striking unity is found to pervade the whole; so that, in spite of having been thus made up of such diverse parts, it forms but one organic whole. The parts are so linked together that the absence of any one book would introduce confusion and disorder. The same doctrine is taught from beginning to end, running like a golden thread through the whole and stringing book after book upon itself like so many pearls. Each book, indeed, adds something in clearness, definition, or even increment, to what the others proclaim; but the development is orderly and constantly progressive. One step leads naturally to the next; the pearls are certainly chosen in the order of stringing.

An unbroken historical continuity pervades the whole book. It is even astonishing how accurately the parts historically dovetail together, jag to jag, into one connected and consistent whole. Malachi ends with a finger-post pointing through the silent ages to a path clearly seen in the Gospels. The New Testament fits on to the Old silently and noiselessly, but exactly, just as one stone of the Jewish temple fitted its fellow prepared for it by exact measurement in the quarries; so that, on any careful consideration of the two coexisting phenomena - utter diversity in origin of these books, and yet utter nicety of combination of one with all - it is as impossible to doubt that they were meant each for the other, were consciously framed each for its place, as it is to doubt that the various parts of a complicated machine, when brought from the factory and set up in its place of future usefulness, were all carefully framed for one another.

But just see where this lands us. Unless we are prepared to allow to a man some fifteen hundred years of conscious existence and intellectual supervision of the work, we are shut up here to the admission of a superhuman origin for this book. It is difficult to see how this argument can be really escaped. It will be perceived that it is analogous to what is often urged from the phenomena of the natural universe to prove for it a divine origin. Indeed, all the arguments urged in the one sphere are also capable of being urged in the other. The gradual framing of the Bible through a period of fifteen hundred years excludes human supervision. Now, the Bible, as a whole, is a result or an effect in the universe, and it must have had, as such, an adequate cause, which, since the result is an intelligent one, must have been an intelligent cause: there is the ontological argument, and it proves a superhuman intelligent cause for the Bible. It consists of orderly arranged parts, of an orderly developed scheme: there is the cosmological argument, and again it proves the activity of an intelligent cause (and much else not now to be brought out) of at least fifteen hundred years' duration. It is itself a cause of marvelous effects in the world for the production of which it is most admirably designed, and its whole inner harmony and all its inner relations are most deeply graven with the marks of a design kept constantly before some intelligent mind for at least fifteen hundred years: there is the argument from design, attaining equally far-reaching and cogent conclusions as in the realm of nature. The analogy need not, however, be drawn out further. An atheist of the present day spoke only sober truth when he declared that the divine origin of the Bible and the divine origin of the world must stand or fall together. The arguments which will prove the one prove also the other. Butler proved this proposition long ago. It stands indubitable; so that absolute atheism or Christianity must be our only choice.

9. Another point in which the unity of the Bible is strikingly apparent needs our attention next: amid all the diversity of its subject-matter, it may yet be said that almost the whole book is taken up with the portraiture of one person. On its first page he comes for a moment before our astonished eyes; on the last he lingers still before their



adoring gaze. And from that first word in Genesis which describes him as the "seed of the woman" and at the same time her deliverer - with occasional moments of absence, just as the principal character of a play is not always on the stage, and yet with constant development of character - to the end, where he is discovered sitting on the great white throne and judging the nations, the one consistent but gradually developed portraiture grows before our eyes. Not a false stroke is made. Every touch of the pencil is placed just where it ought to stand as part of the whole. There is nowhere the slightest trace of wavering or hesitancy of hand. The draughtsman is certainly a consummate artist. And, as the result of it all, the world is possessed of the strongest, most consistent, most noble literary portraiture to be found in all her literature.

Yet we are asked to believe that this grand result has been attained, not by the skilled limning of a Michelangelo, but by the disconnected dabbings of a score and a half of untrained forgers, who, moreover, were ever at cross-purposes with each other. Why, if the creation and successful dramatization, through a few short years, of such a character as Hamlet required the genius of a Shakespeare, what genius was required for this astoundingly successful creation and dramatization of such a character as that of the GOD-MAN through the ages of ages and aeons of aeons - from the time when at his Father's side he sat, coequal with him, before all worlds, to the time when these same worlds shall be swallowed up in the final fire! One should certainly rather risk his sanity in the assertion that the play of "Hamlet" had formed itself by the fortuitous concourse of the alphabetical signs and made its own portraiture of the subtle Dane, than on the assertion that this portraiture of the GOD-MAN had been attained apart from the constant supervision and active labor of a consummate mind. If we should thus consider this portraiture only as a fiction, it would demand for its author something more than has yet been seen in man. As it is undeniable now that it occupies the chiefest portion of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and binds the portions it occupies together as a consistent dramatization of itself, it is equally undeniable that these portions of the Bible, at any

rate, owe their origin to a mind able to superintend their composition for at least fifteen hundred years with a genius hitherto unexampled among men.

10. One other bond of connection between the parts of the volume must needs be adverted to briefly - that formed by numerous predictions of coming events given in the earlier portions and accounts of the fulfillment of them in later portions, by which these later portions are proved to be but the intended outgrowth and conclusion of the former. These predictions run through an immense range both of time and of circumstance, and are made too precise and detailed in form, and too precise and detailed in the account of their fulfillment, for it to be possible to doubt, on the one hand, that they were real predictions, or, on the other, that they were really fulfilled. Thus the various books are drawn close together; and if the Bible, externally considered, may be likened to a bale of drift, these prophecies, given in one part and reaching their fulfillment in another, are the strong cords which bind the bale securely together and make it one whole. The unity induced by this means is, indeed, complete and most conclusive to its own divine origin.

11. Thus we are led to appeal to prophecy, and that not only to prove the unity of the plan of Scripture, but, independent of and far above that - by its very nature as prediction of things yet hidden in the future - as an irrefragable proof of the divine origin of the whole of the closely-knit volume in which it finds place. It is not a function of human intellect to read the secrets of unborn ages; and the existence in this book of accurate, detailed predictions of even unimportant and certainly incalculable events of the far future demonstrates its divine origin.

It is, of course, impossible in this brief essay to illustrate the character and convincingness of Scripture prophecy, or even to indicate instances of its unquestionable fulfillment in detail. Were there space, we might point to the immense number of independent predictions, seemingly opposite, or even contradictory, to one

another, before their fulfillment, found on the coming of Christ to be harmoniously gathered up and fulfilled in his unique personality and work - predictions covering not only the great outlines of his work and the marked traits of his person, but publishing ages beforehand the very village in which he should first see the light, the homage on the one hand, and the abuse on the other, which he should receive, the life he should live and the death he should die, even to the most minute description of the pains he should suffer and the scoffs he should endure as he hung upon the tree - yea, even the exact price of his blood and fate of his betrayer. Or, again, we might point to that ever-living witness to the truth of prophecy in the Jewish race upon whom everything that has been prophesied has been and is being duly fulfilled; or, again, to an infinite multitude of minute details of predictions touching many races and nations which have with infinite might fulfilled themselves everywhere. Space would fail, however, for such an enumeration. And it is the less necessary, now that the feverish efforts, on the part of those who wish to escape from the power of the Bible, to assign later dates to the prophetic books than most cogent proof from many quarters will allow, amount to an admission that the prophetic element in them cannot be denied. In prophecy, therefore, we have a continual miracle set in the midst of the Bible, to stand in all ages as a sure proof that it comes from God. As each prediction is in turn fulfilled before the eyes of each age which witnesses it, a miracle performs itself (and attests itself in the act) which is as cogent and sufficient evidence of the divine origin of the Bible as if all the miracles of the apostolical age were rewrought in our presence to reaffirm its teaching. Thus we see, in perhaps a new light, the meaning of our Lord's pregnant saying: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rise from the dead."

As, then, when we considered the external history of the Bible, we were driven back, step by step, through marvelous circumstances to open miracles of power proclaiming and demonstrating the divine origin of the book, so here, as soon as we look within it in even the most cursory way, we repeat the same process and move back from

marvel to marvel, until we reach the open miracle of prophecy, again independently proving the divine origin of the book after a fashion which cannot be escaped or legitimately questioned.

### **III. THE TEACHING OF THE BIBLE**

The same process is only again repeated, and cumulative evidence for the divine origin of the Bible obtained, when we look somewhat deeper into its contents and ask after the character and witness of its teaching - a subject broad as the earth itself and full of self-evidence, but upon which we have as yet not even cast a glance. The character and the nature of the contents of the Bible alone are enough to prove its divine origin. If men cannot have made the miracles of power by which its publication to the world was accompanied, nor the miracles of prophecy by which its progress through the world has been accompanied, no more can they have manufactured the miracles of teaching of which its contents consist. Independently of all other evidence, the miracle of the contents demands a divine origin. This, again, may be made plainer by some specifications, which again, however, must be presented in a very naked and fragmentary way.

12. Let us note, then, first of all, the unspeakable elevation and grandeur both of the teaching itself which this book presents and of the assumptions on which it bases that teaching.

The conception of God which is here presented - how unutterably divine is it! Apart from the Bible, man has never reached to such a conception. This element of it, and that element of it, has, indeed, through the voice of nature, separately dawned upon his soul; but the complete ideal is conveyed to him only by this book. Infinite and eternal spirit - pure and ineffable - unlimited by matter, or space or

time, infinite, eternal and unchangeable in essence and attributes! And what a circle of attributes! Infinite power, infinite wisdom, infinite justice, infinite holiness, infinite goodness, infinite mercy, infinite pity, infinite love! Verily, if this conception be not a true image of a really existent God, the human heart must say it ought to be. And this is the conception of God which the Bible holds up before us - more than that, which it dramatizes through an infinite series of infinitely varied actions through a period of millenniums of years in perfect consistency of character. Everywhere in its pages God appears as the all-powerful, all-wise, necessarily just and holy One; everywhere as the all-good, all-merciful, necessarily pitiful and loving One. Never is a single one of these ineffable perfections lost or hidden or veiled.

The Bible's conception of the nature of man is of like nobility. Framed in the image of God, he was made like him not only in the passive qualities, but also in his endowment of active capacities. Even freedom of action - unbound ability to choose his own future - were placed in his grasp. So, also, the Bible's teaching as to the duties that man, even after he has made his fatal choice, owes to God and his neighbor, all founded on the principle of love; its teaching as to the possibilities before man and the destiny in store for him, culminating in the possibility of his enthronement as co-ruler of the universe with his divine Redeemer; its teaching as to the relation of man to the physical and irrational universe as responsible head over it; its teaching as to the origin of this universe itself and its purpose and destiny, - all reach the acme of grandeur. These instances must serve us as specimens of the grandeur of its teaching.

13. We must note, still further, that both the general tenor of the Bible and its special assertions are all in precise accord "with what the profoundest learning shows to be the actual state of the universe, as well as what the deepest and largest experience establishes as the actual course of nature." And it is a very pertinent question how it happens that the Bible was able, alone of ancient books, to forestall the conclusions of the latest science of the nineteenth century. It has

taken scientific thought up to to-day to bring its conceptions of the origin of the world to the point at which Moses stood some three millenniums ago. This, again, must serve us now as a specimen fact (among a multitude) proving that "whoever wrote this book knew more than we know, and knew it distinctly when we knew nothing."

Yet, although possessed of a knowledge thus unspeakably advanced beyond all of their time, the writers of this book do not seem to have been proud of their possession or anxious to display it; they do not even formally transmit their knowledge, but simply act and speak on its presupposition; so that when we reach an equal stage of advancement to theirs, without having been hitherto conscious of its presence, we suddenly find it there continually implied and constantly underlying every part. It is thus always most deeply felt by those most conversant with the progress of knowledge, and yet does not in any degree clog the understanding of the book for the purpose for which it was given by those who are as yet ignorant of the basis of physical or philosophical fact assumed.

14. Thus we are led to take note of another general characteristic of biblical teaching - the fact that all its great truths are universal truths; i.e., truths capable of reaching and making entrance into and taking a strong hold upon the heart of man as man, and of all men equally, independently of their race-affinities, intellectual advancement or social standing. That this should be so is undoubtedly a great wonder, and it is redoubled when we remember that it is correlated with great and remarkable knowledge. Usually, when the profound philosopher speaks, he needs philosophers for his audience; and yet here is a book which naturally and without effort betrays acquaintance with the deepest reaches of modern discovery, and yet in its every accent speaks home to the child as readily as to the sage.

In still another respect this same fact - namely, that the truths of the Bible "find us" - has probative force, since, herefrom, it is equally evident that the Bible is suited to man and that its asserted truths are

instinctively recognized by man as actual truths. The Bible thus certainly comes with a message to man - one that is recognized by each man who needs its words as specially for him, and that is witnessed to instinctively by each as true. How does it happen that this book, alone among books, reaches the heart alike of the Bushman and of a Newton? of a savage lost in the horrors of savagery and of a Faraday sitting aloft on the calm and clear if somewhat chill heights of science? This universality of effect seems to prove a corresponding universality of intention. But who of men has ever been able to hold before him as recipients of his book all men of all ages? Who has been able to calculate upon the hearts and characters of men removed from him by such stretches of both time and circumstance? Who could have been able to adapt a message penned in a corner, ages ago, to the mental position of the nineteenth century and the hearts of a Newton and a Faraday? Yet we must assume for the Bible an author who was capable of this. Was Moses capable of it? Was an anonymous forger of his name?

15. We must, however, turn to note another general characteristic of Scripture - the remarkable simplicity of its manner and the transparent honesty of its tone; so that its words, even when describing the most utter marvels, possess that calm, quiet ring which stamps them with indubitable truthfulness. If we are asked why we trust a friend in whom we have every confidence, and credit his every statement, we may be somewhat at a loss for a definite answer. "We know him," we say. This same evidence is good also for a book. We may judge of the truthfulness of men's writings by all those little intangible characteristics which when united go toward making a very strong impression of actual proof, but which one by one are almost too small to adduce or even notice, just as we may judge of the trustiness of men's characters by all the innumerable looks, gestures, chance expressions, little circumstances which make their due impression on us. Combined, they are convincing, though each by itself might seem ambiguous or valueless. The conclusion in each case is, however, valid and rational, and the evidence is unmistakably good evidence. Now, for the Bible, this evidence is

unusually strong; and thus it happens that men who do not know how to reason, and who are incapable of following a closely-reasoned argument, are accepting the Bible on all sides of us on truly rational and valid evidence, and accepting it on like evidence as divine. They are continually reading accounts of miracles so numerous and so striking that the witnesses of them could not be mistaken; so embedded in a narrative of such artlessness, gravity, honesty, intelligence, straightforwardness as palpably to be neither fraud nor fancy that they form part and parcel of it and are absolutely inseparable from it; so embedded in a narrative which approves itself by a thousand simple and inimitable hints and traits to be transparently truthful and trustworthy that they must stand or fall with it. Now, this is most rational evidence, and evidence so strong that it is as difficult for the honest mind to resist it as it is for us to express it.

16. It becomes surely, then, of sufficient importance to justify special notice that in the midst of this narrative, and scattered all through it, we find calm and simple, but frequent, constant, and steadfast, assertions of a divine origin for itself. So honest and transparently truthful a narrative, filled with marks everywhere of superhuman knowledge, naturally enough does not, in the pride of human nature, claim all this superhuman knowledge for its human authors, but ascribes it all to God; naturally enough empties its human authors of any credit for knowledge before the time of knowledge and plans beyond the reach of man and ascribes it all to God. And its very honesty and simplicity of statement, the transparent honesty of this statement, proves the assertion truthful and trustworthy. Here, then, once more, we reach through orderly steps, exhibiting at each stage marks of God's hand, the assertion of a divine origin; here, once more, after walking through the aisles and nave and choir of a grand cathedral filled all along with the marks of genius in its planning and execution, we reach again the wall, and, lo! on it the marks of the chisel and the superscription of the Architect that prove it was made by a competent mind and did not grow.



It is very difficult to see but that the argument, if fully drawn out and illustrated, is conclusive.

## **IV. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BIBLE**

Another, and an even more cogent, argument might be presented from a consideration of some special characteristics either of the whole Bible or of some of its parts - an argument hitherto untouched. This argument would soon, however, grow much too vast to be included in this essay. We must content ourselves with only pointing at a distance to only one particular which might, were there space, be urged most convincingly.

17. We refer to the progressive character of the teaching included in this book, with the special cases which might be adduced under that head. It begins with first principles expressed in outward symbol, and advances gradually to the full system, working out its approaches in history before delivering it in dogma. We do not urge simply that this progressive scheme is consistent with a divine origin for it; we urge that this supremely wise method of delivering truth and training a people, taken in connection with the unity of the system throughout the whole, is consistent with nothing else. No doctrinaire made this Bible - see what kind of work they do in the history of Middle-Age Florence and Revolutionary France - but a most consummate statesman who knew what was in man and how to mould him to his purposes.

We would appeal, in this connection - progressiveness - specially to the practical and practicable character of Old-Testament legislation. And thus we are led to assert that those very passages concerning

polygamy and kindred themes (which have been made an occasion of gibe against the Scriptures) are themselves a most cogent argument for their divine origin. We Americans ought to know by this time that the best way to secure polygamy unharmed and enshrine it unconquerably under the protection of a nation is to write on the statute-books inoperative laws against it. The Bible was framed by too wise a statesman to fall into that error, and we who enjoy Christian homes to-day have to thank God for it. The unspeakable wisdom of dealing at that age, and under those circumstances, with polygamy, divorce, slavery by regulative laws, which in regulating discouraged, and in discouraging destroyed them, makes strongly for a superhuman origin of the legislation.

So, again, growing out of this same progressive system, we could appeal most strongly to the ritualistic system of symbolical worship given to the Jews and by law secured from failure, by which object lessons - all schoolmasters to lead to something better and higher - were ineffaceably taught to a whole nation, which was thus prepared to receive the spiritual lesson meant for it.

Still again we should appeal to the wise method of New-Testament legislation through great principles rather than specific ordinances, thus securing absolute universality in connection with perfect definiteness; or again to the remarkable tenderness and beauty of this legislation, especially apparent in the cases of slaves, wives and children and temporal rulers - a phenomenon in the age when it was given enough of itself to suggest a divine origin for the one book which contains it; or still again to the wise silence of the same legislation on many subjects on which it must have been very tempting then to legislate, but legislation on which we can see now would have imperiled the success of the main purpose for which the book was given and obtained no corresponding gain.

On all these and like points, however, it is not now possible to touch. We pass on, therefore, to our last remark.

## **V. IMPOSSIBILITY OF ACCOUNTING FOR THE BIBLE**

18. That the Bible, thus standing in the world, being of such sort, and having had such a history, has yet to be accounted for on the hypothesis that it had only a human origin. Here it stands, just such a fact in the universe, a substantive thing, tangible and that can be examined. The ingenuity of men has been feverishly busy with it these hundreds of years. Yet the world still awaits a theory which will render an adequate account of it on any other hypothesis than that it came from God. Theories have been attempted, but one after another they have broken down of their own weight or have had justice executed upon them by fellow-unbelieving hands amid the plaudits of all men of all parties. Thus it happens that up to to-day no hypothesis except that of superhuman interference has been able to stand a half century as an account of the origin of this book. What is this but the confession that without the assumption of superhuman interference this book cannot be accounted for? that these miraculous claims and these miraculous assertions cannot be rationally or satisfactorily explained away? Look for one moment at the efforts made to account on natural grounds for the miraculous element in the New Testament. First, a school arose which tried to work on the assumption that whenever a miracle is recorded the event described did really happen, indeed, but that it has been exaggeratedly and mistakenly described as miraculous, and not merely natural, by the New-Testament writers. The sick were healed, but by medicinal means; the dead were raised, but only from seeming, not real, death. That attempt to explain away the miraculous failed, as requiring as great a series of miracles of wonderful coincidences as it explained away. Another then arose which wished to account for it all as a series of myths, holding that

there was a kernel of truth in each event described, but that this kernel had gathered much falsehood around it as it rolled through time, from mouth to mouth, before it got recorded in our Bible, just as a snowball grows almost unrecognizably greater as it rolls down a long slope. But this attempt was wrecked hopelessly on the lack of a soil for the myths to grow in (that is, of snow to frame the balls of) and of time for them to increase in (that is, of any hill for them to roll down). Then another rose on its ruins - an elaborate theory of party strifes and forgeries and re-forgeries of books in every conceivable interest; so that the same material was worked over and over again by false and designing men, to serve each new notion, until the final outcome was our New Testament. Again this theory was wrecked on the lack of time for all this elaborate process before the date at which adequate proof is in hand for the existence of the books. The whole elaborate scheme falls with the failure of the attempted rape of the second century. It cannot be true unless all history is false.

Time is lacking for the New Testament to have grown in, if considered a product of time; whence, then, came it? Soil is lacking for it to have developed in, if considered a human development; then, whence came it? All schemes which have hitherto been invented to account for its origin without God have pitiably failed, and there is no particular reason to look for anything more cogent to be advanced in the future. If, however, this book cannot be accounted for apart from God, we seem shut up to account for it as from him. Certainly, the only rational course is to accept it as from him until it is able to be rationally accounted for without his interference.

With this we may fitly close our inquiry. The query with which we started seems abundantly answered. A supernatural origin for the Bible appears cumulatively proven.

In closing, it would be well for us to take note of one or two facts in regard to the argument which has been offered. Let it be observed, then:

1. That no attempt has been made to distinguish between a superhuman and a divine origin for the Bible. This is not because the two are not separable, but only because they are, in our present argument, practically the same.

2. That no attempt has been made to distinguish between the divine origin of the system and that of the books recording that system. This, again, is not because the two are not separable, but only because, so far as the argument has been pressed - though not much farther - the two need not be practically separated.

3. That no question has been raised as to the extent of the divine in the Bible. This is due to three facts: Because this question need not be raised primarily for the establishment of the faith, but is necessarily a consequent one to be raised after the general divine origin of the book is admitted; because, again, the humble Christian often looks upon and draws life from the Bible without raising this question, simply accepting what he reads as divinely given to strengthen his faith; and because, again, it was impossible in one essay to treat both questions.

4. That, nevertheless, the facts and arguments which have been adduced in a general way to prove the general divine origin of the Bible not only prepare the way, but even, narrowly questioned, will raise a strong presumption, for the further conclusions that this book has been not only in a general way given by God, but also specifically inspired in the giving, that thus its every word is from him, and that it is worthy of our reverent and loving credence in its every particular.

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