

The Bible: What It Claims to Be

The word “Bible” is of Greek origin—“Biblos” meaning “The Book.” It is found in the New Testament, as that is the part of the book originally written in Greek. The first sentence in the New Testament is: “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.” Then the genealogy of Christ is given as recorded in the Old Testament, from Abraham down to his mother, Mary, in the first chapter of Matthew. The third chapter of Luke gives the genealogy from Mary back to Adam, “the son of God.” Thus the Bible traces the origin of the human race back to Adam, which is the only reasonable account ever given of the origin of man. All other efforts to account for the existence of man and of the world are fabulous as compared with the Bible. The first sentence Moses wrote in his part of the Bible was: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” This is one of the sublimest sentences he ever wrote. It unravels and forever settles the mysterious question of the origin of the physical universe. It puts to shame all the mythological claims as to the origin of things, and puts it upon a basis at once plausible and believable. It introduces God's creating the universe, without a word of prove that God is or that he was able to do so much. To have begun with arguments as to the existence of God or his ability to create a universe would have been to create doubts on both these momentous questions; but to put it as it is, is God-like in its length and breadth and depth and height.

We know the universe exists. But whence came it? What Moses said in the first sentence of his five books is the only unquestionable answer ever given. Admitting that God exists there can be no question of his ability to create the heaven and the earth; and that he does exist is abundantly evidenced by the actual existence of the universe we see all about us. In all the nearly six thousand years the earth and man have existed, not a ray of light has reached us, as to their origin, except through Moses. If we do not admit that God exists, the origin of the universe and of ourselves is wrapped in impenetrable darkness, and will so remain. There is no light to come from any other source on these matters. Our eyes are closed, as by blind fate, and will remain so unless we admit that God is. If we admit that, the origin of the world and of man is as plain as any problem that exists. The man that rejects the existence of God forever shuts himself out from any possible light as to his origin or destiny. Denying the existence of God is an utter negation of all light and of every avenue of information as to the origin of things. To deny that God is, is to deny that the earth, the heavens, or man were created. There could be no creation without a creator, and no design in anything without a designer. The universe is a dark blank, with the idea that there is no

God, and no possibility for light on anything that exists. The man that shuts out the idea that God is, shrivels himself up into a bundle of utter and hopeless ignorance, from which it is impossible for him to extricate himself. No man that denies the existence God can possibly prove that he is anything more than a mere animal or that there is any more for him after this life than there is for a parrot. All that we know about the difference between man and the beasts of earth is learned from the Bible, which purports to be a revelation from God. But if there be no God, the Bible is a fraud; there exists no supreme Being to reveal anything. .

But why does any man say there is no God? Does that idea elevate any one? Does it make anybody wiser or better or happier? Does it make better citizens, better homes, better husbands or wives? Look at the heathen world, where there is no knowledge of God. Among them there is no light, no civilization, no true honor, virtue or sense of justice. With them, might makes right. They fear their laws and the officials that execute them, and fear those who have more physical power and authority than themselves. Beyond this there is nothing to restrain them. Their own fleshly impulses, desires, and aspirations are the guides as to what they do. An enlightened and trained conscience by scriptural instruction is wholly unknown among the heathen. They have neither appreciation nor regard for the rights of others. Their own will and wish are their law, unless restrained by laws and forces they dare not violate. It is true, a few heathen nations have opened their doors to civilized influences and have caught some better ideas by contact with civilized people. But not so where no trace of Bible civilization has ever gone. It is a matter of historical fact that where Bible teaching has never gone there is no civilization, no social life that is worth the name, nor any of those tender offices that so sweeten life where Bible civilization reigns in the hearts and lives of the people; and if the Bible were all dropped out and all its inspired teaching obliterated, this dark and rugged sort of heathen life would soon be the condition of the whole world. Is this state of things something to be desired, instead of Christian civilization and that purity of heart and life that abound in Christian lands today?

. But this is only a part of what is lost by denying the existence of God and discarding the Bible. Every incentive that appeals to the heart for a pure and holy life goes with the departure of the Bible and the Christian religion. The grosser passions become the ruling incentives, and, after a coarse and degraded life, men die and disappear like beasts, to know, and be known no more. Is this the sort of prospect that inspires men in this Bible land to deny the existence of God and to trample the light of his truth under foot? Such is the only prospect and outcome for men when they deny the existence of God and the truth of the Book of all books. This is all any man can look for that denies the existence of a supreme Being that

created man and the universe. It cannot be that any sane man would prefer this to the grand and beautiful life and glorious existence hereafter of a faithful Christian. There is but one thing imaginable that could induce any man in a land of Bibles and of the Christian religion to do such a thing, and that would be to avoid submission to the restraining influences of the word of God, and to have excuse for free and full indulgence of the flesh and to lead a sordid life. This is done, too, at the awful risk of being mistaken about the existence of God and of being cast into hell at last with all the nations that forget God. This verifies the statement of Holy Writ that "the fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Surely none other, in view of all the Bible reveals and all it promises to the pure and holy, could be so rash as to do such a thing.

But to those that believe in God and regard the Bible as a revelation from him, it is the most wonderful book ever written. It unlocks the great storehouse of God's great wisdom and knowledge and gives in unmistakable words the origin of the physical universe and the origin of man, who, in the language of God's Book, is "fearfully and wonderfully made." It informs us of the beginning of time and of its terrific end, and all the reliable history we have of this world and of the generations of men for over three thousand years. It gives us the only tangible account of the flood extant in all the world, and why it was brought, which was the great sinfulness of the human race.

The Bible is the channel, and the only channel, through which God speaks to man, and by it he will judge the world at the last day. "God, who at sundry times and, in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." (Heb. 1: 1, 2.) He spoke to the Jewish people through Moses and the prophets; but the world was about twenty-five hundred years old when Moses wrote. Although it was so long after creation before any part of the Bible had been written, yet the part which Moses wrote is perhaps the oldest written document extant at the present time. The other parts of the Old Testament were written from time to time till about four hundred years before the Christian era. So the whole Bible was completed in a little more than fifteen hundred years.

One of the great wonders of this Book, and especially the Old Testament, is that it was written in parts, and by different men, so far apart in time that there was no possible chance for any collusion or plotting together as to what should be written so as to form an agreement to make no contradiction in different parts, and yet to make all the different parts harmonize. Yet it is a fact that these writers do harmonize perfectly as to the matters about which they wrote. Neither as to historical fact nor as to teaching is there any material or irreconcilable conflict.

Such a thing would be impossible by uninspired men. But those writers were guided by an unseen and all-wise Power, which guided them infallibly into the truth in what they wrote, showing that all these writers were guided by the same hand, and that it was a divine hand. This one feature of the Bible is enough to prove it divine. It would be a miracle as great as the creation of a world for as many writers, as were engaged on the Bible, in different ages, in different sections of the country, and on different themes pertaining to the will of God and the duties of men, to stand without conflict in what they wrote.

There were many prophecies written concerning the Messiah and what he should accomplish, so differently expressed that, until fulfilled, they would have seemed to be spoken of different personages and different events. Moses records prophecies made to Abraham, differently expressed, thus: "In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," and, "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed." Then Moses himself uttered a prophecy concerning the Savior that was so different from those given to Abraham that they could hardly have been recognized as referring to the same person: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken . . . I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and, he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." (Deut. 18: 15-19.) These prophecies seemed to speak of different persons and of different things, and before Christ came could not have been identified as referring to precisely the same person and the same event. But since Christ came, it can easily be understood that all those prophecies were completely fulfilled in him, and not a jar or discord between them. These things are interesting to study and wonderfully satisfactory as evidences of the divine origin of the precious words of eternal truth. If the Old Testament had been written by uninspired men, they would never have thought of attempting to utter any such prophecies; they could not have known anything about such a Person or such a Teacher of the word of God as Jesus was. Hence nothing of the sort could possibly have been written by uninspired men. How wonderfully the Book of God is bolstered up by its own evidences of its divine origin! The more one studies the different parts of the Bible and the ages in which it was written, and the wonderful instruction therein given, the more thoroughly will he be convinced of its inspiration.

The Old Testament gives the ancestry of the Messiah and the preparation of the world for his advent into it, besides volumes of the most interesting history the world ever read. In the meantime it shows that mortality, death, and all the sufferings of disease and decay in man were brought on by his own sins; that wars,

pestilences, famines, blights, and all sorts of disasters to crops and to human life generally were brought on in the same way; that Abraham was called out from his country and kindred and from their idolatry, that he might be trained into faithful service to God, become the father of the Jewish nation and the great ancestor of the Messiah, the Savior of sinners. Very largely the Old Testament is filled up with the history of the Jewish people, their variegated lives all spotted and blurred with sin, with chastisements such as few people of this world have ever suffered. Yet part of their history shows that the Jews were the best and most enlightened people the world ever saw till the Christian religion began its great “work of faith and labor of love.” The Bible has the greatest variety of history that was ever written—history of wars, with all their calamities and sufferings; the history of peace and prosperity; the history of contentment and happiness such as no nation of the world enjoyed in those times, except the Jews. Their history shows vividly the hand of God among them, both in their calamities and in their goodness and uprightness, in their elevation of heart and life above all the nations that surrounded them in those olden times.

The Jewish People during the fluctuations of their history produced many of the noblest and best men the people of those countries and times ever saw, while they also produced many of the most wicked and corrupt men known in any country round about them. The Jews were a most wonderful and remarkable people. When they were good, they, showed the power of God's word, even under the most unfavorable circumstances, to elevate people as nothing else under the heavens could do. When they were bad, they showed how the superior enlightenment of God's word can be turned into much greater evil than among nations that did not enjoy the light of God's truth. These things show the hand of God—show an elevation and civilization that no other nation of those times could possibly reach; proving beyond a peradventure the superiority of the word and laws of God over man's wisdom and laws, and that the Old Testament is therefore from God, and that his word even then could do for men that would yield their hearts and lives to its divine instruction, more than all the wisdom of this world combined. Among the good men of the Jewish nation, we mention such men as Abraham (the father of those people), Moses, Caleb and Joshua, Gideon and Samuel; among the kings, David, Hezekiah, and Josiah; among the prophets, Elijah and Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel. There is no record to show that nations outside of the Jews ever produced any such men. In fact, the best evidence of the truth of the Bible to be found in all this world is the Bible itself. The tree is known by the fruit it bears.

Another interesting feature of the Bible along the line of the evidence of its inspiration is the perfect fairness and impartiality in which it represents the

dealings of God with men. The Bible gives historical accounts of God's dealings with all sorts of men—the high and the low, the rich and the poor, the bond and free, from the poorest servant to the grandest hero, with not a shade of partiality shown toward any. When the masses of Israel, from the poorest to the richest, rebelled against God in refusing to go up and possess the land of Canaan, the Lord dealt with all precisely alike. He doomed every one to the very same fate. He dealt with all according to their deeds. They were all rebels against him alike, and he passed the same sentence on all. All the rebels were to wander in the same wilderness till they should die. Forty years, full time to bring the death of all the rebels, were allotted as the time. They wandered the time out, and all the rebels of every grade and class were dead. Caleb and Joshua, who did not sin, and the young, who had not engaged in the rebellion, were all preserved and all permitted to enter the promised land. The shrewdest infidel in the world cannot see a shadow of difference or partiality in the case of a single one of these rebels. They all went down under the same sentence. Moses and Aaron were among the innocent when the sentence was passed. Moses was still their great leader, their hero, and Aaron the high priest. The weary years of this sad wandering wore on, while the rebellious ones were rapidly dropping out, until the forty years were drawing toward their close, Moses still a great and good man. Trouble after trouble had come; Moses and Aaron still held to their integrity. But one sad occasion came for them. A great uprising came from the people on account of having no water to drink, and they raised a great murmuring against Moses and Aaron as they were thus suffering from thirst. Moses and Aaron went to the Lord about the matter, and he gave them specific directions what to do to obtain water for the people. They started out all right to obey these commands, but committed some bad errors before they got through. They left out one plain, positive command, and added two items God had not commanded; and God, on account of these things, denied them the privilege of leading the people into the land he had promised them, and doomed both these men to die outside of that goodly land.

Thus these great leaders were punished for their sins just as the poorest of the host they led. There never was any partiality with God in dealing with men. God was indeed no respecter of persons; he was a respecter of characters, but not of persons. No such impartiality can be found among any of the heathen kings or potentates the world ever saw. Men were judged by their deeds, not by their wealth, nor by their grade or standing among men. This is a principle so far above what humanity unaided by revelation has ever done that it shows beyond a peradventure that the God of the Bible is just the being it represents him to be, and that he is the author of that most wonderful volume. No wisdom ever belonged to

uninspired man that could produce such a book as the Bible, and no mere earthly ruler ever dealt with men upon the principles the God of the Bible has always done.

We may, therefore, be fully assured when we read the pages of this, the most remarkable book in all the world, that it is of divine origin, and that the God it represents is the prime author of it; that he created the universe; that he created man, gave him his superior intelligence and a soul that will live on when the body dies, and may live eternally in heaven if faithful to God in this life.

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