

# The Divine Origin of the Bible

ITS AUTHORITY AND POWER DEMONSTRATED  
AND DIFFICULTIES SOLVED

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## CONTENTS.

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	PAGE
CHAPTER I	
THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE . . . . .	9
CHAPTER II	
DIFFICULTIES OF THE BIBLE . . . . .	49
CHAPTER III	
THE DIVINE POWER OF THE BIBLE . . . . .	78

## PREFACE

The fundamental question in theology is, "Is the Bible from God, and of absolute authority in faith and practice?" If we firmly believe that it is, we have a starting point from which we may advance to the conquest of all truth. If we do not firmly believe that it is, we are all at sea, drifting, and no one can tell where we will come out, only it is very sure that we will not come out right. The writer of this book was once all at sea in this way. He doubted that the Bible had any divine authority. Indeed, he doubted if there were a God. He sincerely desired to know. He studied the Book itself, putting aside all prejudice for it or against it. He desired simply to know the truth in the matter. That study of the Book has now been going on for twenty-three years. He did not so much study what men had to say about the Book as the Book itself, its actual contents, in the English and in Hebrew and Greek. As the outcome of that

study he has the most absolute confidence in the divine origin, authority, and power of the Book. It is impossible to put all the reasons for that confidence into any limited number of words; but some of the reasons that will appeal to honest men of common sense are given in this book, with the hope that they will bring to others the joy and blessing the writer himself enjoys from having passed out of the blighting darkness of skepticism into the perpetual sunshine of faith in that Book, the entrance of whose words giveth light.

## CHAPTER I

### THE DIVINE ORIGIN AND AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE

1. *The first proof that the Bible is of divine origin and possesses divine authority is the testimony of Jesus Christ to this fact.* It is very common for "advanced thinkers" to say that they do not believe the Bible as a whole to be the word of God, but they do accept the authority of Jesus Christ. Now, this statement is utterly illogical. For if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we must accept the whole Bible as being the Word of God, of divine origin, and of absolute divine authority. In Mark vii. 13, Jesus calls the law of Moses "the Word of God," and sternly denounces those who set up their speculations against its authoritative proclamation of God's will. Here, then, Jesus sets His seal to the divine origin and authority of the first five books of the Old Testament. This is the very portion of the Bible about which there is the most bit-

ter controversy to-day. If that portion will stand, there need be no concern about the rest. In Matthew v. 18 (R. V.), Jesus says, "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." A jot is the Hebrew character "jodh," the smallest character in the Hebrew alphabet, less than half the size of any other character in the Hebrew alphabet, and a "tittle" is the little horn put on a consonant, less in size than the cross we put on a "t." So Jesus says that the law of Moses is of inviolable divine authority, down to its smallest part. In John v. 47, He asks, "If ye believe not his (Moses') writings, how shall ye believe My words?"—thus showing the utter folly of those who say, "We will not accept the authority of the Pentateuch," but claim to accept the authority of Jesus Christ. In Luke xvi. 31, He exposes the hopeless blindness of those who will not yield to the divine authority of the teaching of the law and the prophets by saying, "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." In John x. 35, Jesus says, "The Scripture *can-*

*not be broken.*” He has just built an argument on a single word used in the Psalms, and He thus sets His seal to the absolute verbal inerrancy of the Old Testament Scriptures. In Luke xxiv. 27, we read that “beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” It is evident from this that He regarded the testimony of the Old Testament as of divine origin. But still more plainly does he declare their absolute authority and inerrancy in the forty-fourth verse, by saying, “All things *must be fulfilled* which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me.”

It is a well-known fact that the Jew divided the books of the Old Testament into three divisions: the Law, the Prophets (the books we call prophetic and some of the historic books), and the Psalms (the remaining books of our Old Testament). Jesus here takes up each of these divisions, and sets His seal to its absolute divine authority, asserting “all things” therein written “*must be fulfilled.*” So it is plain that if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we must accept the divine

origin and authority of the entire Old Testament.

But how about the New Testament books? Does Jesus testify to their divine origin and authority? He does. This might appear at the first thought impossible; for not a single one of those books was written until after Jesus had spoken His last word on earth. . . But when we turn to John xiv. 26 (R. V.) we hear Him saying to the apostles, "The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you." Here, then, Jesus testifies to the inspiration and completeness of the apostolic teaching. He sets His seal to its divine origin and authority. Further than that He certifies to the accuracy and completeness of their recollection of what He Himself had said. The question is often asked, "What guarantee have we that in the reports of the apostles we have an accurate record of the words of Jesus? Might they not forget what He said, and thus misreport it?" Undoubtedly they might forget, but Jesus Himself tells us that they should not be left to their own fallible



memories, but that the Holy Spirit should bring to their remembrance all that He had said unto them. So in the gospels we have not the apostles' recollection of what Jesus said, but the Holy Spirit's recollection, and He never forgets. In John xvi. 12, 13 (R. V.), Jesus goes still further in His indorsement of the apostolic teaching. He says, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth." Here Jesus says that the teaching of the apostles would not only be as true as His own, but that it should be even more complete than His own. There were many things to be said which He must keep back in His personal ministry, for they were not yet ready for them, but when the Holy Spirit was come He would lead them "into *all the truth.*" So if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we must accept the authority of the apostolic teaching, and that teaching as being a more perfect revelation of the truth than His own, as, indeed, being an absolutely perfect and complete revelation, containing "all the truth." One of the favorite cries to-

day of those who would minify the authority of apostolic teaching is "Back to Christ"; but when we get back to Christ we hear Him crying: "Forward to the apostles! In their teaching you will find a more complete revelation of truth than in the words I uttered while on earth, for I kept back some things because men were not ready for them. But in the Spirit-taught apostles you will find 'all the truth.' "

It is perfectly clear, then, that if we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, we must accept the divine origin and authority of all the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. But every candid investigator must accept the authority of Jesus Christ. Why? Because Jesus Christ Himself is accredited to us by five testimonies which are clearly divine. He is accredited to us by the testimony of the divine life He lived; for He lived as never man lived. Any one who will put away all prejudice, and carefully study that unique life, must consent to the judgment of him who knew men so well, and said, "I know men, and Jesus Christ was not a man." Jesus Christ is accredited to us again by the testimony of the divine words He spake; for whoever

studies those words will consent to the verdict of those who were sent to arrest Him and could not, saying, "Never man spake like this man." Jesus Christ is accredited to us again by the divine works He wrought. The gospel stories of Jesus' works have been subjected to the fiercest and ablest attacks, in the vain hope of discrediting them. But the ingenious theories of David Strauss and Ernest Renan and a host of less gifted imitators have gone utterly to pieces. At least the substantial accuracy of the gospel narratives has been established beyond the possibility of candid doubt. That is enough for our present purpose. Jesus, then, not only healed the hopelessly sick, which, it may be said, many others have done, and opened the eyes of those born blind, but He displayed creative power, turning water into wine, feeding to the full more than five thousand people with five loaves and two small fishes, and He raised the dead. These beyond a question are divine works, and He is thus accredited by the divine works He wrought. Jesus Christ is accredited to us again by the divine influence He has exerted upon the whole subsequent history of the

race. Jesus Christ is accredited once more by the divine attestation of His resurrection from the dead. It is not, of course, possible in this place to go into a consideration of the evidence for the resurrection of Christ from the dead. This, however, the writer has done, and he knows that any one who will candidly and fully consider the evidence in the case, without predisposition for or against, will be forced to conclude that the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is one of the best proven facts of history. It is, then, a direct attestation of God to Jesus Christ. So we see Jesus Christ is accredited to us by five testimonies which are clearly divine. We must, then, accept His testimony. But we have already seen that if we accept His testimony, we must accept the divine origin and authority of the whole Bible, for to this He clearly certified. Therefore, the divine origin and authority of the Bible is proven.

*2. The second proof of the divine origin and authority of the Bible is its fulfilled prophecies. Fulfilled prophecy is a fact, and a fact that every honest and intelligent and serious-*

minded person must face and account for. There are many prophecies in the Old Testament of things that were to occur hundreds of years in the future. These prophecies, in many instances, were most plain, minute, and explicit, and they have been fulfilled to the very letter. The average man and woman, and even the average Christian, knows little or nothing about prophecy. When the writer undertook the study of prophecy some years ago, he was amazed at the number and explicitness of the prophecies that had been literally fulfilled. So is every one else that goes into the subject with any thoroughness, fairness, and candor. Many are the skeptics and infidels who have been converted to a faith in the Bible as the Word of God by the study of Bible prophecies. The subject is a very large one, and the fullness of the proof can only be hinted at in a book like this. There are three lines of prophecy in the Old Testament; prophecies about Israel, prophecies about the Gentile nations, and prophecies about the Messiah. We will confine ourselves by way of illustration to prophecies about the Messiah, and to four of the many of these. In Micah v.

2, Jeremiah xxiii. 5, Isaiah liii, Daniel ix. 24-26, we have very explicit predictions as to the place where the Christ should be born, the family of which He should be born, the state of the family at the time of His birth (a state entirely different from that existing at the time of the prophecy), the way He should be received by men and by His own people (a way entirely contrary to all human probability), His death, the precise manner of His death, His burial with its accompanying circumstances minutely given, His resurrection and victory subsequent to His death. These predictions were literally fulfilled with the utmost exactness in Jesus of Nazareth. The attempt has been made over and over again by the rationalists to break the force of the argument by denying that Isaiah liii. refers to the Messiah, but the attempt has broken down utterly. Not only has it been completely proven from their own works that the Jewish rabbis interpreted it of the Messiah, but furthermore, when the question has been asked, if it does not refer to the Messiah, to whom does it refer, the best answer that they can give is, "It refers to suffering Israel." But

any one can see this is impossible, if he will study the chapter for himself. The sufferer of Isaiah liii. is an innocent victim, suffering for the sins of *another*, to whom the stroke was due (vs. 4-8; see especially Am. R. V.), and this other than himself for whom he was suffering was "my people"—i. e., Israel. So evidently the sufferer cannot be Israel. There are many other reasons why the sufferer cannot be Israel, but this is conclusive and sufficient. By any theory of authorship that any one has ever ventured to propound, these prophecies were made centuries before Jesus of Nazareth. How, then, do we account for their fulfillment in Him? Man can look a few years ahead and predict in *a general way* to what result causes now operant will lead. But no man can look centuries ahead and predict many specific things about a specific individual and have them come true to the letter. Only the all-knowing God can do that, and proven fulfilled prophecies of this sort prove a divine origin of the Book. To quote the words of another: "Whenever we detect a power of foresight which has been able to penetrate the dark centuries that were lying

before it, and to declare with unflinching accuracy the things that should come to pass, we know that such powers must have proceeded from God, and from God alone."

One very suggestive fact about the prophecies is that there would sometimes be two apparently contradictory lines of prophecy, and yet both be literally fulfilled in the outcome. For example, there are two lines of prophecy about the Christ. One line of prophecy set forth an all-conquering Messiah, who should break the nations with a rod of iron and be all-triumphant. (Ps. 2, and many passages.) The other line of prophecy set forth a suffering Messiah, "despised and rejected of men," slain, crucified. (Is. liii., Dan. ix. 24-26, Zech. xii. 10.) So great was this enigma and apparent contradiction that this solution was proposed: that there were to be two Messiahs, one a suffering Messiah of the tribe of Joseph, and the other a conquering Messiah of the tribe of Judah. But in the outcome the enigma is solved in the two comings of the one Messiah, the first coming to suffer and make atonement for sin, the second coming to conquer and to reign. When



the acts which occur centuries after make clear the prophecies uttered centuries before, and fulfill both sides to the letter, must not an honest and candid mind see God back of the prophecies?

There are in the Bible other prophecies about heathen cities which seemed improbable of fulfillment at the time, and in part contradictory and impossible of fulfillment, but they are being literally fulfilled right before our eyes, in our own day. *Was God back of these prophecies, or wasn't He?*

But there is another class of prophecies more remarkable still, the prophecies contained in the types of Scripture. When you ask the superficial student of the Old Testament what portion of the Old Testament is prophetic, he will mention the major and minor prophets, and perhaps some of the other explicit verbal prophecies scattered through the Psalms, the historical books, and the law of Moses. But ask the man who has really gone into the study of the Old Testament thoroughly and profoundly, and he will tell you that the entire Old Testament is prophetic; that its legislation is prophetic, its history is prophetic,

## 22     The Divine Origin of the Bible

its personages are prophetic, its institutions are prophetic. Then if you wonder what he means, and will take time to inquire, he will show you how everything about the tabernacle—for example, its threefold division, its furniture, the table of shew-bread, the golden candlestick, the altar of incense, the ark of the covenant, the brazen altar, the laver, the boards of the tabernacle, the coverings of the tabernacle—were prophetic of great facts and truths about Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation and the church and heaven. He will show you how Joseph was a prophetic type of Christ in many marvelous ways. He will show you the same thing about David and Solomon. And so he will go on, and show you wonderful foreshadowings of Christ, and of the church, and of Israel's rejection of the Messiah, and the coming day of atonement for Israel, and the feast of tabernacles that is to follow. And if you follow him closely you will soon see that this is not at all fanciful, but that evidently the real author of these portions of Scripture intended all this. Of course, to fully appreciate the force of this, one must go deeply into it, and the more deeply he goes

into it the more will he be filled with wonder and admiration. Unfortunately the destructive critics never do go into these things. They are so occupied with their ingenious literary speculations and the pursuit of methods of literary analysis and criticism that have been discredited and abandoned in other branches of literary study than the study of the Bible, that they have no time for the study of the actual contents of the literature they are analyzing and of which they are trying to discover "the sources." When the attention of the writer was first called to the types, he thought the things claimed about them fanciful. But study of them has thoroughly convinced him of his mistake. Now, how are we to account for these innumerable minute foreshadowings of facts to come to pass and truths to be revealed centuries later? Is this within the power of man's wisdom? Any candid man knows it is not. As one honestly studies these things he is led to exclaim, "Surely, this is the hand of God." As any man who is not blinded by sin studies the leaf of a tree or the dust of a butterfly's wings beneath the microscope, he sees the wis-

## 24 The Divine Origin of the Bible

dom and the hand of God in it, and as any one microscopically studies the types of the Old Testament, ever more and more clearly does he see the hand of God in them.

3. *The third proof of the divine origin and authority of the Bible is the unity of the Book.*

It has been often said that the Bible is not merely a book, but a literature. This is true, and a marvelously composite literature it is. There are in it sixty-six books, composed by about forty authors, in three different languages, exhibiting many styles of literary composition—epic poetry, lyric poetry, erotic poetry, elegy, dirge, didactic poetry, rhapsody, and prose, history, prophecy, vision, allegory, parable, proverb. These books extend in the period of their composition over at least fifteen hundred years. They were composed in lands far remote from one another. The writers lived under widely differing forms of civil government, and were from every class of society, from the king upon his throne down to the shepherd, the fisherman, the herdsman, the cheap politician, and the prisoner in his cell. Now, in such a conglom-

erate literature as that what would we naturally expect? The widest diversity, disagreement, and contradiction. In point of fact, what do we find? The most singular harmony and unity from the first verse of the first book to the last verse of the last book. Now here is a fact clamoring to be accounted for. How is it to be accounted for rationally and fairly, except on the ground that back of the human authors was the all-governing and superintending mind of God? And the more one studies, the more evident it becomes that this superintendence of God extended down to phrases, words, and the minutest shadings of a word.

The character of this unity is significant. First of all, it is not a superficial, but a profound unity. On the surface there oftentimes seems to be wide divergence, and even flat contradiction, but the deeper we go below the surface the more the unity appears. It is also an organic unity. It is not a mechanical unity, but the unity of life and growth. In the early books we have the seed, the germinal truth, farther on the young plant, then the bud, the blossom, and the perfect fruit. Can any one question that God is in this?

## 26 The Divine Origin of the Bible

Suppose it were proposed to build in our capital city a temple that should represent all the States of the Union. Stones for this building were to be brought from the granite quarries at Quincy, Mass., the marble quarries at Rutland, Vt., the brown stone quarries at Middletown, Conn., the gray sandstone quarries at Berea, Ohio, the malachite quarries of Northern Michigan, the brownstone quarries at Kasota, Minn., the porphyry quarries below Knoxville, Tenn., and so on through all our States. These stones were to be of all conceivable sizes and shapes—cubical, spherical, cylindrical, conical, trapezoidal, rectangular parallelepipeds. Each stone was to be cut into its final shape in the quarry from which it was taken. Now, when the stones are brought together and builded into the temple, every stone fits into its place. There is not a stone too many or a stone too few; not a stone left over, and not an unfilled niche anywhere. And there arises before your vision a temple of splendid proportions, with its side walls, its buttresses, its nave, its choir, its transept, its arches, pillars, domes, and spires, perfect in every outline and in every detail,

every stone just fitted to its place, and yet every stone finished in the quarry from which it was taken. How would you account for this? There is one very simple way of accounting for it, and there is only one rational way of accounting for it at all. That is this: back of the individual stone-cutters in the quarries was the master architect who planned the whole from the beginning and gave to each individual workman his specifications for the work. It is exactly so with this eternal temple of truth which we call the Bible. As we have seen, the stones for it were quarried at places and at times most remote from one another, and yet every stone fits into its place, and there is not one stone too many or one too few, and it has stood throughout the centuries a glorious temple, perfect in every outline and in every detail, and yet every stone hewn into its final shape in the quarry from which it was taken. How shall we account for it? In one way, very simply, and in only one way at all. Back of the human hands that wrought was the Master mind of God that thought and gave to each individual writer his specifications for his work.

## 28 The Divine Origin of the Bible

4. *The fourth proof of the divine origin and authority of the Bible is the immeasurable superiority of its teachings to those of any other book or all other books.* The Bible is absolutely unique in its teachings. Many there are who put the Bible in the same class with other sacred books and with the teachings of the great thinkers of the ages—with Buddha, Zoroaster, Mohammed, Confucius, Socrates, Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, Isocrates, Seneca, Epictetus, etc. Those who do this must be ignorant either of the teachings of the Bible or of the teachings of the others. There are three radical points of difference between the teachings of the Bible and all these others.

*First*, the Bible contains nothing but truth. These others contain truth, but truth mixed with error. They have jewels, indeed, in them, but they are "jewels picked out of the mud." Take, for example, Socrates, for whom so much is claimed. This great philosopher did, indeed, teach most beautifully how a philosopher ought to die, but his admirers often forget to tell us that he also taught a woman of the town how to conduct her



infamous business. "Did not Marcus Aurelius Antoninus teach beautiful things about clemency?" we are asked. Yes, and he also taught that it was right to fiercely persecute people for no other crime than that of being Christians; and being emperor and having the power to do it, he practiced what he preached.

*Second*, these other teachings contain part of the truth, but the Bible contains *all* truth. There is not a single truth on moral or spiritual subjects that cannot be found for substance within this one book. Often when lecturing on this subject the writer has challenged any one to bring one truth on moral or spiritual subjects that he could not find in the Bible. No one has ever succeeded in doing it. I have taken pains to compare some of the better teachings of those who have attacked the Bible with those of the book they have attacked. I found in the infidels some jewels of thought, but in every case, whether they knew it or not, they were stolen jewels, and stolen from the very book they ridiculed. If all the books besides the Bible that were ever written were destroyed, there would not be a single moral or spiritual truth lost, if we had

the one book, the Bible, left. Is not that a deeply significant fact?

*Third*, the Bible contains more truth than all other books taken together. Bring together from all the literature of ancient and modern times, the literature of Persia, India, China, Greece, Rome, all lands, all that is good, sift out all that is bad or worthless, bring the result together into a book, and you will not have then a book that will take the place of the Bible. Burn up all books but the Bible; you do not suffer loss of a single moral or spiritual truth. Burn up the Bible, and have all other books left, and you suffer irreparable loss. How does this come to be? It is a fact that demands accounting for by honest and thoughtful men, that man in all the centuries of his thinking has not thought out as much truth as is contained in this one book that is now more than eighteen centuries old. The Bible is not such a large book. Copies of it are common that one can carry in his vest pocket, and I have seen one that I could hold in the palm of my hand and hide completely by closing my fingers; and yet in this small compass there was more of the wisdom that is

real and eternal than in all the thinking that *man* has done in centuries. How will you account for it? Rationally and fairly in only one way: this book does not contain man's thinking, but God's.

5. *The fifth proof of the divine origin and authority of the Bible is the history of the book, its omnipotence against all man's attacks upon it.* The Bible is not only the most intensely loved book in the world; it is also the most bitterly hated. Scarcely had the Bible been given to the world before men discovered that it condemned sin, laid human pride in the dust, and demanded the renunciation of sin, of the world, and of self, and so man hated the Bible. Man's hatred of the Bible has been of a most persistent, determined, relentless, and bitter character. It has led to eighteen centuries of repeated attempt to undermine faith in the Bible, and to consign the Bible itself to oblivion. These attempts have utterly failed. Celsus tried it with the brilliancy of his genius, and he failed. Porphyry tried it with the depth and subtlety of his philosophy, and he failed. Lucien tried it with the keen-

## 32 The Divine Origin of the Bible

ness of his satire, and he failed. Then other weapons were used. Diocletian, the mightiest ruler of the mightiest empire of the world, brought to bear against the Bible all the power of Rome. He issued edicts that every Bible should be burned, but that failed. Then he issued the edict that all who possessed a Bible should be put to death. But even that failed. So for eighteen centuries the assault upon the Bible has continued. Every engine of destruction that human philosophy, human science, human reason, human art, human cunning, human force, and human brutality could bring to bear against a book has been brought to bear against this book, and yet the Bible stands absolutely unshaken to-day. At times almost all the wise and great of earth have been pitted against the Bible, and only an obscure few for it. Yet it has stood. At times men have fancied the Bible had gone down, but when the smoke has cleared away from the field of battle there it stood, not one stone shaken, and the fierceness of the assault only serving to illustrate again the impregnability of the citadel. Why is it that the Bible has proved omnipotent against all the centu-

ries of attack that man has been able to make? There is but one candid answer. Because it is God's book. If the Bible had been man's book it would have gone down and have been forgotten centuries ago; but because in this book there is the hiding not only of God's wisdom, but also of His power, it stands and wonderfully fulfills the deeper meaning of Christ's words, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

6. *The sixth proof of the divine origin and authority of the Bible is the character of those who accept it and the character of those who reject it.* Sometimes when a man says to me, "I believe the Bible is the word of God," I feel like replying: "I am glad that you do. The fact that a man who lives so near God, and knows God so well, believes that He is the author of this book, is a confirmation of my own faith." And when some other men say to me, "I do not believe the Bible is the word of God," I almost feel like replying: "On the whole, I am glad that you do not. The fact that a man who lives so far away from God, and knows so little of God, doubts

## 34 The Divine Origin of the Bible

that the Bible is His word, rather confirms my faith that it is." Of course, it is not meant by this that every man who professes to believe in the Bible is better than every man who doubts it. But this much is meant: Find a man who has entirely surrendered his will to God, who is leading a life of self-renunciation, of devotion to God and his fellow-man, of humility and prayer, and in every instance you will find a man who is fully convinced that the Bible is God's word. An exception to this cannot be found. On the other hand, find a man who denies or continuously doubts that the Bible is the word of God, and in every instance you will find a man who is leading either a life of lust, or greed for money, or self-will, or pride. In other words, those who live nearest God and know God best, with absolute unanimity say the Bible is God's word; those who deny it are those who live farthest from Him. Which shall we believe? Suppose a manuscript were found purporting to be by Oliver Wendell Holmes, and there was much discussion and difference of opinion as to whether Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote it or not. But when

it was taken to the critics to decide, every one of them who had lived nearest to Oliver Wendell Holmes, had known him best, and were most in sympathy with his life and thought, said that it was by him. Those who doubted it were those who had lived farthest from him in life and thought, and knew him least. Which would you believe? This is the exact case with the Bible: those who live nearest to God, who are most in sympathy with His life and thought, who know Him best, with one voice proclaim that the Bible is God's work; those who deny or doubt it are those who live farthest from Him. Which will you believe? But that is not all. The nearer men get to God the stronger becomes their faith that the Bible is the word of God; the more they drift away from God, the more full they become of doubts. This is a common experience, that men who are both skeptics and sinners, by the simple fact of giving up their sins, lose their doubts. Did any one ever know an instance of the opposite sort, where a man was a believer and a sinner, and by giving up his sins lost his faith. On the other hand, instances are of constant occurrence of men

## 36 The Divine Origin of the Bible

who once had a firm and serene faith in the Bible as the word of God, who, by becoming entangled in sin and worldliness, begin also to be filled with doubts. Indeed, my experience of late years with skeptics has led me, when men tell me that they are getting skeptical, to ask them what they have been doing, and a confession of sin often follows a profession of skepticism. Where is the stronghold of the Bible? The pure, happy, loving, holy home. Where is the stronghold of skepticism and infidelity? The saloon, the gambling-den, the race-course, and the brothel. If a man should go into a saloon and lay a Bible on the bar and call for a glass of whisky, it would occasion wonder and remark; there would be such incongruity in his actions. But if a man should go into a saloon and lay any skeptical or infidel book on the bar and call for a glass of whisky, it would excite no comment nor wonder; there would be no incongruity. It would be exactly what men expect. The Bible and whisky do not go well together; infidelity and whisky do go well together.



7. *The seventh proof that the Bible is of divine origin and authority is the influence of the Book.* The Bible, as every observant man knows, has more power to save men, more power to gladden, beautify, and ennoble human lives, more power to lift men up to God than any other or all other books. Now a stream can rise no higher than its source, and a book that possesses a power to lift man up to God that no other book possesses must have come down from God in a way no other book has. I recall a man of brilliant gifts, but who had become stupefied and brutalized and demonized by drink, and he was an infidel. He was persuaded to receive the Bible as the Word of God, and by the power of this book he was set free and transformed into a humble, gentle, pure, unselfish lover of God and man. Could any other book, or all other books, do that? What other book or books have the power to elevate not only individuals, but communities and nations, that this book possesses? Why this unique divine power? Because it is in an unique sense of divine origin.

8. *The eighth proof that the Bible is of divine origin and authority is its inexhaustible depth.* All that is finite is fathomable. The Bible is unfathomable. Whatever man has produced, man can exhaust; but no man, no generation of men, not all the tens of thousands of men together that have devoted their best abilities and the best years of their lives to the study of this book, have been able to exhaust this book. Men of the best minds that the world has ever known, men of widest culture, men of rarest intellectual grasp, men of keenest insight and profoundest ability have dug into the book for years and years, and the more they have dug, the deeper they saw the depths still below them to be and the richer the golden ore. Vast libraries have been devoted to the exposition of this book, and still it is unexhausted. Why cannot men exhaust this book in eighteen centuries of digging? There can be but one fair answer. What man has produced man can exhaust, and the only reason why the whole race is unable to exhaust this book is because it is not man's book, but God's, and in it are hidden the infinite and inexhaustible treasures of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

A brilliant Unitarian writer, in trying to disprove the divine origin of the Bible, says: "How irreligious to charge an infinite God with having written His whole word in so small a book." That is one of the keenest arguments ever uttered from the side of unbelief. But the writer did not see how his Damascus blade could be wrenched from his hand and its keen edge turned against himself. What a conclusive testimony it is to the divine origin of this book that such infinite wisdom has been packed in so small a compass! Man could never do it. Only God can put infinite treasures in so small a space that you can carry them in your vest pocket.

9. *The ninth proof of the divine origin and authority of the Bible is the fact that as we grow in wisdom and holiness we grow toward the Bible.* In other words, as we grow toward God we grow toward the Bible. Every thoughtful student of the Bible has had this experience with it. When he began the study of the Bible he found many things in it that were difficult to accept. But as he went on studying and growing in wisdom and holiness of character,

the differences between himself and the Bible kept growing fewer and fewer. The nearer he got to God, the nearer he got to the Bible; the nearer he got to God, the nearer he got to the Bible. Now, what is the inevitable mathematical conclusion? The nearer he gets to God the nearer he gets to the Bible, the nearer he gets to God the nearer he gets to the Bible. It is clear, then, that when he and God meet, he and the Bible will meet also. That is, the Bible was written from God's standpoint.

Suppose, that you are traveling through a forest under the leadership of an experienced guide. The way is all new to you, but before starting, this guide had been brought to you by those whom you have every reason to trust, and they tell you how he has conducted them and many a party safely through the forest, and that there has never been a mishap to those who have followed his leadership. After a while you come to a place where two paths diverge. The guide tells you that the path to the right is the one to take. But your reason and common sense, judging by all

the indications, tell you that the path to the left is the one to take. So you turn to the guide and say, "You have been through this forest often, and have been highly recommended to me, and therefore I have great confidence in you. But in this instance my reason and common sense tell me that you are wrong. I know that my reason and common sense are not infallible, but they are the best guides I have, and so I must follow them." So you go down the path to the left. But you do not get far before you run into a morass, and have to come back and go the way the guide said. After a while you come again to a place where two paths diverge. This time the guide says, "The path to the left is the one to take." But your reason and common sense say, "The path to the right is the one to take." Again you turn to the guide and say, "I have great confidence in you. You have been highly recommended to me, and you were right in the former instance and I was wrong; but my reason and common sense tell me that the path to the right is the one to take. I know my reason and com-

## 42 The Divine Origin of the Bible

mon sense are not infallible, and that they were wrong in the former instance, but they are the best guides I have, and I cannot be untrue to them; so I must take the path to the right." So you go down that path, and in a little while you come to an impassable barrier of rock, and are obliged to go back and take the path the guide said. Now, suppose this occurred fifty times, and in every instance the guide proved right and your reason and common sense proved wrong. Would you not, by the fifty-first time, have sense enough to throw your "reason and common sense" overboard and go the way the guide said? Indeed, would not your reason and common sense themselves take the guide's decision into account as the most important factor in deciding which path to take? This is just my experience with the Bible. I have come to the fork in the road more than fifty times, and in every instance where my reason and common sense differed from the Bible, the Bible has proved right and my reason wrong; and from this time on I trust I have sense enough, when a difference occurs, to throw my reason to the winds and go the way the Bible says.

10. *The tenth proof of the divine origin and authority of the Bible is the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit.* What we mean by that is this: One can put himself into such an attitude toward God and His truth that the Holy Spirit will bear direct testimony to him that the voice that speaks to him from the Bible is the voice of God. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice." (John x. 27.) This is true. A real sheep of Christ has a power of discernment whereby he can distinguish the voice of Christ and the voice of God from other voices. Jesus said again, "He that is of God heareth God's words." (John viii. 47.) This also is true. The one born of God has an ear for the voice of God, and can tell it when it speaks, and he knows that the voice that speaks to him from the Bible is the voice of his Father. Any one can get into that position where he obtains this power of spiritual discernment, or rather where the Holy Spirit testifies to him that the voice that speaks to him from the Bible is the voice of God. The way into this position is very simple, and one that commends itself to every honest man's conscience. Jesus points it out in John vii. 17: "If any

## 44 The Divine Origin of the Bible

man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it be of God," etc. (R. V.). Absolute surrender to the will of God is the path that leads into the place where one knows that the voice that speaks to him from the Bible is the voice of God. Many have taken this path, and all have come out at the same place, the place where they know the Bible is the Word of God. It has been the path out of skepticism to faith for countless men and women of all classes of society. I was once speaking to a man of wide reading and wide experience. He had been through Unitarianism, Theosophy, Spiritualism, and much besides, and was now a thoroughgoing agnostic. He was a graduate of a British university. He had been present at a lecture upon "How to Deal with Skeptics and Infidels," in which I offered to lead any honest skeptic, infidel, or agnostic into the light of faith in the Bible as the Word of God and Jesus as the Son of God. At the close of the lecture he came to me, and said: "I do not wish to be discourteous, sir, but really my experience contradicts everything you have said to-day." I replied, "Have you taken



the steps that I have mentioned, and do you still remain a skeptic?" "Yes." "Let us be sure of this," I said, and called out my secretary and dictated something like this: "I believe there is an absolute difference between right and wrong, and I hereby take my stand upon the right, to follow it wherever it carries me. I promise to make an honest search to find if Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and if I find that He is, I promise to accept Him as my Saviour and confess Him as such before the world." When this was written out I handed it to the gentleman and asked him if he would sign it. He read it carefully, and said that he was perfectly willing to sign it, but that there was "nothing in it," as his case was "very peculiar." He signed it, however. I then said, "Do you know that there is no God?" "No," he answered; "no man *knows* that there is no God. I am an agnostic, I neither affirm nor deny." "Do you know God does not answer prayer?" "No. I don't know that God does not answer prayer, but I do not believe He does." "Well, I know that He does," I replied, "but my knowledge will do you no good. But here is a possible clew.

## 46 The Divine Origin of the Bible

Now, you are a university graduate, and you know that the method of modern science is to follow out a possible clew to discover what there is in it. Will you adopt this method of science in the matter of religion? Will you follow out this possible clew? Will you pray this prayer, 'O God, if there is any God, show me if Jesus Christ is Thy Son, and if you show me that He is, I promise to accept Him as my Saviour and confess Him as such before the world?'" "Yes," he said, "I will do that, but there is nothing in it. My case is very peculiar." "Now, one thing more: John tells us in his gospel, 'These things are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye may have life in His name.' (John xx. 31, R. V.) Now, you have promised to make an honest search to find if Jesus Christ is the Son of God. This book was written for the very purpose of convincing men of this. Will you take it and read it thoughtfully and honestly, only a few verses at a time, meditating upon what you read, and asking God each time you read to give you light, and promising Him to follow as much light as He gives you? Don't

try to force belief, but be willing to believe if it is true. Will you do it?" "I have read that book again and again already," he replied. "Yes, but I am asking you to read it in a new way. If you are an honest skeptic, you will. Will you?" "Yes, but there is nothing in it; my case is very peculiar." In a short time we met again. Almost his first words were, "There is something in that." "I knew that before," I replied. "Ever since I did what I promised you I would do, it is as if I had been caught up by the Niagara River and was being carried along, and the first I know I shall be a shouting Methodist." A few months later I met him again. His agnosticism had all gone, and things to which he had formerly listened, he said, "are all foolishness to me now." Any one can test the efficacy of this method by trying it for themselves. It never fails. One evening I was speaking with another gentleman, who was a professed agnostic. Suddenly he turned to me and said: "I am sixty-six years old. I can't live long, and I have no children to leave my property to, and I can't take it with me. I would give every penny of it if I could

## 48 The Divine Origin of the Bible

believe as you do." "I can tell you how," I answered. "I wish you would." "Let us go into the house." We went in and I asked the gentleman's wife for a sheet of paper, and wrote out a pledge similar to that given above. Then I handed it to the gentleman, and asked him if he would sign it. He read it, and replied: "Why, any man ought to be willing to sign that. You only ask me to agree to do what my own conscience tells me I ought to do." "Will *you* sign it?" "Why, anybody ought to be willing to sign that." "Will *YOU* sign it?" "I will think about it." He never signed it. He died as he had lived, without God and without hope. He told the truth about one thing; he did not take a penny of his money with him. He went to a Christless grave and a Christless eternity. But whose fault was it? He had been shown a way out of darkness into light, out of skepticism into faith, which he admitted his own conscience told him he ought to take, and he would not take it. Will you take it?

## CHAPTER II

### DIFFICULTIES OF THE BIBLE

We have considered ten satisfactory proofs that the Bible is of divine origin and authority. Any one of these taken alone is sufficient to establish the point, but taken together they constitute an argument that must be of overwhelming force to any one unless he is determined that he will not believe.

But when we come to the candid and thoughtful study of the Bible itself we are soon confronted by grave difficulties. We find that in the Bible "are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteady wrest unto their own destruction." (II. Pet. iii. 16, R. V.) We find other things which it is very hard to believe—indeed, some things which at first it appears impossible to believe. We find some things which it seems impossible to reconcile with other things in the Bible. We find some things that seem

incompatible with the thought that the whole Bible is of divine origin and inerrant. We have no desire to conceal the fact that these difficulties exist. We rather desire to frankly face and consider them. What shall we say concerning these difficulties that every thoughtful student will sooner or later encounter?

#### I.—GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

I. *The first thing we have to say about these difficulties in the Bible is, that from the very nature of the case difficulties are to be expected.* Some people are surprised and staggered because there are difficulties in the Bible. I would be more surprised and more staggered if there were not. What is the Bible? We have seen that it is a revelation of the mind and will and character and being of the infinitely great, perfectly wise, and absolutely holy God. But to whom is this revelation made? To men, to finite beings. To men who are imperfect in intellectual development and consequently in knowledge, and in character, and consequently in spiritual discernment. There must, from the very necessities of the case be difficulties in such a

revelation made to such persons. When the finite tries to understand the infinite there is bound to be difficulty. When the ignorant contemplate the utterances of one perfect in knowledge there must be many things hard to be understood and some things which to their immature and inaccurate minds appear absurd. When sinful beings listen to the demands of an absolutely holy being they are bound to be staggered at some of His demands, and when they consider His dealings they are bound to be staggered at some of His dealings. These dealings will appear too severe, stern, harsh, terrific. It is plain that there must be difficulties for us in such a revelation as the Bible is proven to be. If some one should hand me a book that was as simple as the multiplication table, and say, This is the Word of God, in which He has revealed His whole will and wisdom, I would shake my head and say, "I can't believe it. That is too easy to be a perfect revelation of infinite wisdom." There must be in any complete revelation of God's mind and will and character and being, things hard for a beginner to understand, and the wisest and best of us are but beginners.

2. *The second thing to be said about these difficulties is, that a difficulty in a doctrine, or a grave objection to a doctrine, does not in any wise prove the doctrine to be untrue.* Many thoughtless people fancy that it does. If they come across some difficulty in the way of believing in the divine origin and absolute inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible they at once conclude that the doctrine is exploded. That is very illogical. Stop a moment and think and learn to be reasonable and fair. There is scarcely a doctrine in science commonly believed to-day that has not had some great difficulty in the way of its acceptance. When the Copernican theory, now so universally accepted, was first proclaimed, it encountered a very grave difficulty. If this theory were true the planet Venus should have phases as the moon has. But no phases could be discovered by the best glass then in existence. But the positive argument for the theory was so strong that it was accepted in spite of this apparently unanswerable objection. When a more powerful glass was made, it was discovered that Venus had phases after all. The whole difficulty arose, as all those in the Bible



arise, from man's ignorance of some of the facts in the case. The nebular hypothesis is commonly accepted in the scientific world to-day, but when this theory was first announced, and long afterward, the movements of the planet Uranus could not be reconciled with the theory. Uranus seemed to move in just the opposite direction from what it was thought it ought to move according to the demands of the theory. But the positive arguments for the theory was so strong that it was accepted, in spite of the inexplicable movements of Uranus. So we see that according to the common-sense logic recognized in every department of science (with the exception of Biblical criticism, if that be a science), if the positive proof of a theory is conclusive it is believed by rational men, in spite of any number of difficulties in minor details. He is a shallow thinker who gives up a well-attested truth because of some facts which he cannot reconcile with that truth. And he is a very shallow Bible scholar who gives up the divine origin and inerrancy of the Bible because there are some supposed facts that he cannot reconcile with that doctrine. Unfortunately we have

many shallow thinkers of that kind, even in our pulpits.

3. *The third thing to be said about the difficulties in the Bible is that there are many more and much greater difficulties in the way of a doctrine that holds the Bible to be of human origin, and hence fallible, than are in the way of the doctrine that holds the Bible to be of divine origin, and hence infallible.* A man will bring you some difficulty, and say, "How do you explain that, if the Bible is the word of God?" and perhaps you may not be able to answer him satisfactorily. Then he thinks he has you. But not at all. Turn on him and ask him, "How do you account for the fulfilled prophecies of the Bible if it is of human origin? How do you account for the marvelous unity of the book? How do you account for its inexhaustible depth? How do you account for its unique power in lifting men up to God?" etc., etc., etc. For every insignificant objection he can bring to your view, you can bring many deeply significant objections to his view, and no candid man will have any difficulty in deciding between the two

views. Not long since a bright young man, who was unusually well read in skeptical, critical, and agnostic literature, told me that he had given the matter a great deal of candid and careful thought, and he could not believe the Bible was of divine origin. I asked him why not. He pointed to a teaching of the Bible that he could not and would not believe true. I replied, "Supposing, for the moment, that I could not answer your specific difficulty, that would not prove the Bible was not of divine origin. I can bring you many things far more difficult to account for if the Bible is not of divine origin than there is to account for if the Bible is of divine origin. You cannot deny the fact of fulfilled prophecy. How do you account for it, if the Bible is not God's word? You cannot shut your eyes to the marvelous unity that pervades the sixty-six books of the Bible, written under such divergent circumstances and at periods of time so remote from one another. How do you account for it if God is not the real author back of the human authors? You cannot deny that the Bible has a power to save men from sin, to bring men peace and hope and

joy, to lift men up to God, that all other books, taken together, do not possess. How do you account for it if the Bible is not the word of God in a sense that other books are not the word of God?" The objector had no answer. The difficulties that confront one who denies that the Bible is of divine origin and authority are far more numerous and weighty than those that confront one who believes it is of divine origin and authority.

4. *The fourth thing to be said about the difficulties in the Bible is, the fact that you cannot solve a difficulty does not prove that it cannot be solved, and the fact that you cannot answer an objection does not prove at all that it cannot be answered.* It is passing strange how often we overlook this very evident fact. There are many who, when they meet a difficulty in the Bible and give it a little thought and can see no possible solution, at once jump at the conclusion that a solution is impossible by any one, and so throw up their faith in the inerrancy of the Bible and in its divine origin. A little more of that modesty that is becoming

in beings so limited in knowledge as we all are would have led them to say, "Though I see no possible solution to this difficulty, some one a little wiser than I might easily find one." Oh! if we would only bear in mind that we do not know everything, and that there are a great many things that we cannot solve now that we could easily solve if we only knew a little more. Above all, we ought never to forget that there may be a very easy solution to infinite wisdom of that which to our finite wisdom—or ignorance—appears absolutely insoluble. What would we think of a beginner in algebra who, having tried in vain for half an hour to solve a difficult problem, declared that there was no possible solution to the problem because he could find none? Not long ago a man of much experience and ability left his work and came a long distance to see me in great perturbation of spirit because he had discovered what seemed to him a flat contradiction in the Bible. It had defied all his attempts at reconciliation. But in a few moments he was shown a very simple and satisfactory solution of the difficulty.

5. *The fifth thing to be said about the difficulties in the Bible is that the seeming defects in the book are exceedingly insignificant when put in comparison with its many and marvelous excellencies.* It certainly reveals great perversity of both mind and heart that men spend so much time expatiating on the insignificant points that they consider defects in the Bible, and pass by absolutely unnoticed the incomparable beauties and wonders that adorn and glorify almost every page. What would we think of any man who, in studying some great masterpiece of art, concentrated his entire attention upon what looked to him like a fly-speck in the corner. A large proportion of the much vaunted "critical study of the Bible" is a laborious and scholarly investigation of supposed fly-specks. The man who is not willing to squander the major portion of his time in this investigation of fly-specks, but prefers to devote it to a study of the unrivaled beauties and majestic splendors of the book, is not counted "scholarly" and up-to-date

6. *The sixth thing to be said about the difficulties in the Bible is that the difficulties in the*

*Bible have far more weight with superficial readers of it than with profound students.* Take a man like Colonel Ingersoll, who was totally ignorant of the real contents and meaning of the Bible, or that class of modern preachers who read the Bible for the most part for the sole purpose of finding texts to serve as pegs to hang their own ideas upon, to such superficial readers of the Bible its difficulties seem of immense importance; but to the one who has learned to meditate on the word of God day and night they have scarce any weight at all. George Müller, who had carefully studied the Bible from beginning to end more than one hundred times, was not disturbed by any difficulties he encountered. But to the one who is reading it through for the first or second time there are many things that perplex and stagger.

7. *The seventh thing to be said about the difficulties in the Bible is that they rapidly disappear upon careful and prayerful study.* How many things there are in the Bible that once puzzled us and staggered us that have been perfectly cleared up, and no longer pre-

sent any difficulty at all! Is it not reasonable to suppose that the difficulties that still remain will also disappear upon further study?

## II.—CLASSES OF DIFFICULTIES

The various difficulties can be included under ten general classes.

1. *The first class of difficulties are those that arise from errors in the text from which our English Bible was translated.* We do not possess the original manuscripts of the Bible. These original manuscripts were copied many times with great care and exactness, but naturally some errors crept into the copies that were made. We now possess so many good copies that by comparing one with another we can tell with great precision just what the original text was. Indeed, for all practical purposes the original text is now settled. There is not one important doctrine that hangs upon any doubtful reading of the text. But when the authorized version was made, some of the best manuscripts were not in reach of the translators, and the science of textual criticism was not so well understood as it is to-



day, and so the translation was made from an imperfect text. Many of the difficulties in the Bible arise from this source. For example, we are told in John v. 4, that "An angel went down at a certain season and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." This statement, for many reasons, seems exceedingly improbable and difficult of belief. But upon investigation, we find that it is all a mistake of a copyist. Some early copyist, reading John's account, added in the margin his explanation of the healing properties of this intermittent medicinal spring. A later copyist embodied this marginal comment in the body of the text, and so it came to be handed down and got into our Bibles. Very properly, it has been omitted from the Revised Version.

The discrepancies in figures in different accounts of the same events—as, *e. g.*, the differences in the ages of certain kings as given in the Books of Kings and Chronicles—doubtless arise from the same cause, errors of copyists.

## 62 The Divine Origin of the Bible

2. *The second class of difficulties are those that arise from incorrect translations.* For example, in Matthew xii. 40, Jonah is spoken of as being "in the *whale's* belly." Many a skeptic has made merry over the thought of a whale with the peculiar construction of its mouth and throat swallowing a man. But if the skeptic had only taken the trouble to look the matter up he would have found that the word translated "whale" really means "sea-monster." Probably in this case it was a dog-shark. So the whole difficulty arose from the translator's mistake and the skeptic's ignorance. There are many skeptics who are so densely ignorant of matters now understood by many Sunday-school children that they are still harping in the name of "scholarship" on this supposed error in the Bible.

3. *The third class of difficulties are those that arise from false interpretations of the Bible.* What the Bible says is one thing, what men interpret it to mean is often something widely different. Many difficulties that we have with the Bible arise not from what the Bible actually says, but from what men

interpret it to mean. Take, for example, the first chapter of Genesis. This entire chapter has often been taken as giving a detailed account of the successive steps of creation, and each of the days has been interpreted as meaning a period of twenty-four hours. Hence the first chapter of Genesis is said to contradict the established conclusions of modern science. But any one who has studied his Bible with thoroughness and care knows that the word "day" is frequently used in the Bible for extended periods. In fact, as long ago as the time of St. Augustine, centuries before the discoveries of modern science were dreamed of, the "days" of Genesis i. were interpreted on exegetical grounds to mean long periods of time. But further than this, there are very grave exegetical reasons for doubting whether anything after verse 1 is a description of creation at all. An interpretation of Genesis i. that has very much in the Bible in its favor would make verse 2 read "and the earth became waste and desolate." This form of expression, "waste and desolate," is used elsewhere in Scripture to describe judgments for sin. (See, *e. g.*, Jer. iv. 23, R. V.; same

## 64 The Divine Origin of the Bible

Hebrew as in Gen. i. 2.) Genesis i. 2 is therefore taken to hint at a judgment of God upon the earth for the sin of some one, perhaps of a pre-Adamite race, and the remainder of the chapter to verse 25 would then describe not the original creation of the earth, but its rehabilitation, to be the abode of the Adamic race that God was about to create.\* If we accept this interpretation, no discoveries of ancient forms of life in the strata of the rock that ever have been made, or ever can be made, can conflict with Genesis i., for the geologic periods lie back of it. But it is sufficient for our present purpose to show that all the assaults that have been made on Genesis i. from the standpoint of physical science are assaults not upon what the Bible says, but upon man's interpretation of what it means. Another difficulty of the same character is that with Jesus' statement that He should be "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." It is said that He died Friday afternoon, and rose early Sunday morning, and the time between is far from three days

\* This view is worked out with great force in Pember's "Earth's Earliest Ages." (Revell, \$1.50.)

and three nights. But it is wholly a matter of interpretation that He died *Friday* afternoon. A careful reading and comparison of the accounts has led many to believe that it was on "the preparation of the Passover" yearly Sabbath (John xix. 14), and not the preparation of the weekly Sabbath (Friday) when Jesus was crucified—*i. e.*, He was crucified Wednesday. Then followed the Passover (Thursday), then the preparation of the weekly Sabbath (Friday), then the weekly Sabbath (Saturday); then Jesus rose, having been in the grave just seventy-two hours, exactly three days and three nights. So the difficulty is wholly with an interpretation, and not with what the Bible says.

4. *The fourth class of difficulties are those that arise from a wrong conception of the Bible.* Many treat the Bible as if the fact of its divine origin and authority made God the speaker in every utterance it contains. But oftentimes God simply records what others said, good men and bad men, inspired men and uninspired men, angels, demons, and the devil himself. The record is from God, and

## 66 The Divine Origin of the Bible

absolutely true, but persons are often truly reported to have said what is not true. In other words, it is true that men and the devil said these things, but what they said was not true. For example, the devil is recorded as saying to Eve, "Ye shall not surely die." It is true that the devil said it—that the devil said it is God's word—but what the devil said is not true, but an infamous lie that shipwrecked our race—what the devil said is the devil's word. Now, very many careless readers of the Bible do not notice who is talking—God, good men, bad men, inspired men or uninspired men, angels or devil—but tear a verse right out of its context, regardless of the speaker, and say, "There God said that," when perhaps God Himself in the context says a bad man or the devil said it. It is very common to hear men quote what Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar said to Job as if it were God's word, in spite of the fact that God expressly disavows their teaching, and says to them, "Ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right" (Job xlii. 7). It is true that these men said the things God records them as saying, but oftentimes they gave the truth a

twist and said what is not right. Many of our difficulties arise from not noticing who is speaking. The Bible always tells us, and we should always note. In the Psalms we have sometimes what God said to men, and that is always true, but on the other hand, we often have what man said to God, and that may or may not be true. Sometimes, far oftener than most of us see, it is the voice of prophecy; sometimes, it is the voice of vengeance or despair. This vengeance may be and often is prophetic, but it may be the wronged man committing his cause to Him to whom vengeance belongeth (Rom. xii. 19), and we are not obliged to defend all that is said. In the Psalms we have even a record of what the fool said—viz., “There is no God.” (Ps. xiv. 1.) Now it is true that the fool said it, but the fool lied when he said it. So in studying our Bible, if God is the speaker, we must believe it. If an inspired man, we must believe. If it is an uninspired man, it is perhaps true, perhaps not. If it is the devil who is speaking, we do well to remember that he was a liar from the beginning.

5. *A fifth class of difficulties are those that arise from the language in which the Bible was written.* The Bible is a book for all ages and for all kinds of people, and therefore it was written in the language that continues the same and is understood by all, the language of the common people and of appearances. It is not written in the terminology of science. Thus, for example, what occurred at the battle of Gibeon (Josh. x. 12-14) is described in the way that it *appeared* to all those who saw it, and the way in which it would be understood by all those who read about it. There is no talk about the refraction of the sun's rays, etc., but the sun is said to have "*stood still* in the midst of heaven." It is one of the perfections of the Bible that it was not written in the terminology of modern science. If it had been, it would never have been understood until the present day, and even now only by a few. Furthermore, as science and its terminology are constantly changing, the Bible, if written in the terminology of the science of to-day, would be out of date in a few years, but being written in just the language chosen, it has proved the book of all ages, all



lands, and all conditions of men. Other difficulties from the language in which the Bible is written arise from the fact that large portions of the Bible are poetical, and are written in the language of poetry, the language of feeling, passion, imagination, and figure. Now, if a man is hopelessly prosaic, he will find difficulties with these portions of the inspired word. For example, in Psalms xviii., we have a marvelous description of a thunder-storm. But let a prosaic fellow get hold of that (*e. g.*, vs. 8), and he will be head over heels in difficulty at once. But the trouble is not with the Bible, but with his own stupid prosaicness.

6. *The sixth class of difficulties are those that arise from our defective knowledge of the history, geography, and usages of Bible times.* For example, in Acts xiii. 7, Luke speaks of "the deputy," or more accurately, "the proconsul" (see R. V.) of Cyprus. Roman provinces were of two classes, imperial and senatorial. The ruler of an imperial province was called a "proprætor," of a senatorial province a "proconsul." Up to quite a recent

date, according to the best information we had, Cyprus was an imperial province, and therefore its ruler would be a "proprætor"; but Luke called him a "proconsul." This certainly seemed like a clear case of error on Luke's part, and even conservative commentators felt forced to admit that Luke was in slight error, and the destructive critics were delighted to find this "mistake." But further and more thorough investigation has brought to light the fact that just at the time of which Luke wrote, the senate had made an exchange with the emperor, whereby Cyprus had become a senatorial province, and therefore its ruler a proconsul; and Luke was right after all, and the literary critics were themselves in error. Time and time again further researches and discoveries, geographical, historical, and archæological, have vindicated the Bible and put to shame its critics. For example, the Book of Daniel has naturally been one of the books that infidels and higher critics have most hated. One of their strongest arguments against its authenticity and veracity was that such a person as Belshazzar was unknown to history, and that all historians agreed that

Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon, and that he was absent from the city when it was captured; and so Belshazzar must be a purely mythical character. Their argument seemed very strong; in fact, unanswerable. But Sir H. Rawlinson discovered at Mugheir and other Chaldean sites clay cylinders, on which Belshazzar (Belsaruzur) is named by Nabonidus as his eldest son. Doubtless he reigned as regent in the city during his father's absence, an indication of which we have in his proposal to make Daniel third ruler in the kingdom (Dan.v. 16), he himself being second. So the Bible was vindicated, and the critics put to shame. It is not long since the higher critics asserted most positively that Moses could not have written the Pentateuch, because writing was unknown in his day. But recent discoveries have proven beyond a question that writing far antedates the time of Moses. So the higher critics have had to give up their argument thought they have had the bad grace to hold on stubbornly to their conclusion.

*7. The seventh class of difficulties are those that arise from our ignorance of the conditions*

*under which books were written and commands given.* For example, God's commands to Israel as to the extermination of the Canaanites, to one ignorant of the conditions, seem cruel and horrible. But when one understands the moral condition to which those nations had sunken, and the utter hopelessness of reclaiming them, and the weakness of the Israelites themselves, their extermination is seen to be an act of mercy to all succeeding generations and to themselves.

8. *The eighth class of difficulties are those that arise from the many-sidedness of the Bible.* The broadest-minded man is one-sided, but the truth is many-sided, and the Bible is all-sided.

So to our narrow thought one part of the Bible seems to contradict another. Men, as a rule, are either Calvinistic or Arminian, but some portions of the Bible are decidedly Calvinistic, and present great difficulties to the Arminian type of mind, and other portions of the Bible are Arminian, and present difficulties to the Calvinistic type of mind. So, too, Paul seems to contradict James, and James Paul, and what Paul says in one place seems

to contradict what he says in another place. But the whole trouble is that our narrow minds cannot take in God's large truth.

9. *The ninth class of difficulties are those that arise from the fact that the Bible has to do with the infinite, and our minds are finite.* It is necessarily difficult to put the facts of infinite being into the limited capacity of our finite intelligence, just as it is difficult to put the ocean into a pint-cup. To this class of difficulties belong those connected with the Bible doctrine of the Trinity, and the divine-human nature of Christ. To those who forget that God is infinite the doctrine of the Trinity seems like the mathematical monstrosity of making one equal three. But when one bears in mind that the doctrine of the Trinity is an attempt to put into forms of finite thought the facts of infinite being, and into material forms of expression the facts of the Spirit, the difficulties vanish. The simplicity of the Unitarian conception of God arises from its shallowness.

## 74 The Divine Origin of the Bible

10. *The tenth class of difficulties are those that arise from the dullness of our spiritual perceptions.* The man who is farthest advanced spiritually is still so immature that he cannot expect to see everything yet as an absolutely holy God sees it, unless he takes it upon simple faith in Him. To this class of difficulties belong those connected with the Bible doctrine of eternal punishment. It oftentimes seems to us as if this doctrine cannot be true, must not be true. But the difficulty arises from the fact that we are still so blind spiritually that we have no adequate conception of the awfulness of sin, and especially of the awfulness of the sin of rejecting the infinitely glorious Son of God. But when we have become so holy, so like God, that we see the enormity of sin as He sees it, we shall have no difficulty with the doctrine of eternal punishment.

As we look over the ten classes of difficulties we see that they all arise from our imperfection, and not from the imperfection of the Bible. The Bible is perfect, but we being imperfect, have difficulty with it. But as we grow more and more into the perfection of

God, our difficulties grow less and less, and so we naturally conclude that when we become as perfect as God is, we shall have no difficulties with the Bible whatever.

### III.—HOW TO DEAL WITH THE DIFFICULTIES OF THE BIBLE

How shall we deal with the difficulties of the Bible?

1. First of all, *honestly*. Whenever you find a difficulty in the Bible frankly acknowledge it. If you cannot give a good, square, honest explanation, do not attempt any as yet.

2. Second, *humbly*. Recognize the limitations of your own mind and knowledge, and do not imagine that there is no solution just because you have found none. There is, in all probability, a very simple solution, even when you can find no solution at all.

3. Third, *determinedly*. Make up your mind that you will find the solution if you can by any amount of study and hard thinking. The difficulties in the Bible are our Heavenly Father's challenge to us to set our brains to work.

## 76 The Divine Origin of the Bible

4. Fourth, *fearlessly*. Do not be frightened when you find a difficulty, no matter how unanswerable and insurmountable it appears upon first acquaintance. Thousands of men have found such before you. They were seen hundreds of years ago, and still the old book stands. The Bible that has stood eighteen centuries of rigid examination and incessant and awful assault is not going under before your discoveries or before the discharges of modern critical popguns. These destructive critics always remind one of a man firing at a modern man-of-war with a bean-shooter, and wondering why it doesn't sink.

5. Fifth, *patiently*. Do not be discouraged because you do not solve every problem in a day. If some difficulty defies your best effort, lay it aside for a while. Very likely when you come back to it, it will have disappeared, and you will wonder how you were ever perplexed by it.

6. Sixth, *Scripturally*. If you find a difficulty in one part of the Bible, look for other Scripture to throw light upon it and dissolve it. Nothing explains Scripture like Scripture.

7. Seventh, *prayerfully*. It is simply



wonderful how difficulties dissolve when one looks at them on his knees. One great reason why many modern Bible scholars have learned to be destructive critics is because they have forgotten how to pray.

## CHAPTER III

### THE DIVINE POWER OF THE BIBLE

We have seen that the divine origin and authority of the Bible is conclusively proven. We now turn to a consideration of its divine power as experienced in the lives and hearts of men. The Bible exhibits its unmistakably divine power in many directions.

1. *First of all, the Bible possesses and exerts divine power in convicting men of sin.* Explain it as we may, it is certain that the Bible possesses a strange power, possessed by no other book, of opening the eyes of men to the fact that they are great sinners in the presence of a Holy God. It proves itself in actual trial "the sword of the Spirit," pricking men to the heart as on the day of Pentecost. (Acts ii. 37.) How many thousands and tens of thousands of men who were careless or self-satisfied have been brought under deep convic-

tion of sin while reading the Bible, or by a single verse of Scripture that some one has quoted to them? There is case after case on record of heathen who have never before seen a Bible or heard of one, into whose hands a portion of the Bible has fallen, who have been overwhelmed by conviction at reading that portion of Scripture. Their hearts have been laid bare, and they have seen themselves in all their vileness. Infidels who have sneered at the book have been struck down by its power. An utterly irreligious and impious man who had not been in a church for fifteen years strayed one night into a meeting where the writer was speaking. In the course of the sermon a verse of Scripture was quoted that pierced like an arrow to the man's heart. He tried to pull it out, and could not. It rankled. He walked the streets and cursed the text. At last, after weeks of vain resistance, he walked into the church again, and arose and told his experience, and surrendered to Christ. Instances of that kind could be multiplied without number. The Bible does possess a divine power of laying bare the heart and revealing us to ourselves as God sees us.

## 80 The Divine Origin of the Bible

It is, as every faithful preacher of it knows, "like a fire and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces." It is the one instrument that breaks hearts of adamant. The self-righteous moralist can be transformed into the penitent sinner by its power. Proud-hearted men are humbled when they are brought face to face with a Holy God and hear His voice, and as a matter of demonstrated experience men hear the voice of God in the Bible, and are convicted of sin and brought down upon their faces before the God whose voice they there hear. It is men who preach the Bible, and personal workers who use the Bible, who prove themselves mighty in bringing men under deep conviction of sin and to true repentance.

2. *The Bible possesses divine power to regenerate men, to make them new creatures, to impart to them a new nature, to make them partakers of the divine nature.* This also is a fact that has been proven tens of thousands of times. While some have been speculating about the authorship of the various books of the Bible, and trying to construct a philo-

sophical theory of inspiration, wiser and more practical men have been studying the actual contents of the book, and expounding its truth to a lost world. And God has set His seal upon their labors in a wonderful way. While the former class have succeeded only in filling the minds of men with questions and doubts, or, at the best, have simply convinced them intellectually of the authenticity of the book, the latter have transformed men from lives of sin and selfishness and despair into lives of holiness, self-renunciation, likeness to God, peace and joy and hope. In actual use the Bible proves itself to possess regenerating power. On the board of deacons of the writer's church there are at least six men who were once drunkards, outcasts, and thoroughly reprobate, who are now living most exemplary lives, who are centers of power in the community in which they live, and the change was wrought in each one of them by the power of the Bible. One of them was a most wicked, reckless, and blasphemous fellow. He has stood outside the church in which he is now a deacon with a pitcher of intoxicating liquor, and offered it to people as they came out. It

## 82     The Divine Origin of the Bible

seemed necessary to warn people against his influence in the inquiry meeting which he frequented. But he went home one night and went to bed a godless wretch. In the middle of the night he woke up with a passage of the Bible burning in his heart. Without getting out of bed, he closed with God's offer of mercy in Christ, and arose in the morning a transformed man. The transformation has stood a quarter of a century of testing as to its reality. The Bible will make any man who will study it, believe it, and obey it, a new creature. It will impart to him new tastes, new affections, new purposes, a new disposition, a new character through and through. It will make him a true child of God. He will be "born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, *by the word of God*, which liveth and abideth forever" (I. Pet. i. 23). This power to transform ruined men into the likeness of God, to make them actual partakers of God's own nature, is unquestionably divine, and this power the Bible unquestionably possesses.

3. *The Bible possesses divine power to produce faith.* Faith is the gift of God, but it is by His word that God imparts this gift. It is not merely a statement of the Bible "that faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. x. 17); it is also a fact of experience. It is the Bible itself that transforms men from skeptics and infidels and agnostics into believers in God, believers in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, and believers in the Bible as the word of God. The Bible has a self-evidencing power that no other book possesses. Books on Christian evidences are very good in their place, but if you can get a skeptic or agnostic to honestly and thoroughly study the Bible itself, it will quickly convince him that it is of God. In the days of the writer's utter doubt and darkness books of Christian evidences were helpful, but the unwavering, abounding faith that he enjoys today in the Bible as the absolute word of God has come more from the study of the book itself than from anything else, and this is the testimony of all who have honestly and thoroughly studied it. One book in the Bible, the Gospel of John, has in the writer's experi-

## 84     The Divine Origin of the Bible

ence with skeptics and agnostics been used to lead very many out of the darkness of unbelief into the light and joy of an assured faith in Jesus as the Son of God. It is as certain that the Bible has power to produce faith in the heart of one who really desires to know and obey the truth as it is that food satisfies hunger and water quenches thirst.

The Bible has also power to produce the faith that asks and get great things in prayer, and the faith that attempts and achieves great things in service. George Müller stands out as the one man above others in our day who has wrought wonders by prayers, a poor man who got together nearly eight million dollars for the Lord's work by simply asking for it, and this was but part of what he wrought. This mighty man has left us in no doubt as to the secret of his power in prayer. He tells us that always before praying he pondered the word of God, and his prayers were begotten of Bible study. As he thus pondered the word, his faith waxed strong to lay hold of God for great things, and he got them. Where is the mighty man of prayer that has ever come forth from the womb of the higher criticism?



The power of prayer is not a matter of speculation, but demonstration, and it is born of Bible study.

4. *The Bible possesses divine power to cleanse from the sin and imperfection that still clings to him, the one who has been already begotten again by its power.* The Bible has power not only to take impurity out of the heart, but to remove it from the outward life as well. It is true to-day as it was in the days of the Psalmist, that the wherewithal for one to cleanse his way is by taking heed thereto according to God's word, and that the best way to keep from sinning against God is by hiding God's word in the heart (Ps. cxix. 9, 11). The man or woman who systematically, thoughtfully, prayerfully, obediently studies the Bible will find their lives growing white. We have seen this demonstrated again and again in the lives of people from all ranks of society. We have seen it proven in the lives of persons born in the slums, and who inherited the instincts and habits and language of the slums. We have seen it just as clearly proven in the lives of those who were reared in the

midst of culture, refinement, and high ethical ideals. It might seem that the characters and lives of such would be unsullied anyway, but by the study of the cleansing book those lives and characters have become whiter and whiter as they approached the dazzling whiteness of the absolute holiness of Him who is light and in whom there is no darkness at all (I. John i. 6).

5. *The Bible possesses divine power to promote growth of Christian character.* Life is a gift of God. It defies all man's ingenuity and all the progress of his science to produce it. Growth, also, is God's work. Only the things that God has made promote growth, the things that themselves have life in them. The Bible possesses this power to promote growth. Other things being equal, men grow in beauty and strength and completeness of character just in proportion as they study the Bible. Other books in which there is a large admixture of Bible truth promote growth because of the Bible truth that is in them; but to this day no book promotes growth by its study as does the Bible itself. The writer of this book

has enjoyed unusual opportunities to observe this fact, as superintendent of an institute devoted exclusively to Bible study, where several hundred are regularly enrolled as students each year, and six thousand persons attend the evening classes, and as pastor of a church of sixteen hundred members, where unusual emphasis is laid upon Bible study. Large numbers of persons just beginning the Christian life, others who have been Christians for years, but who are suffering from retarded spiritual development, persons of all degrees of culture and of all sorts of domestic and social environment, have been seen to enter at once upon a period of rapid, healthy, continuous, steady, symmetrical growth when they have begun the systematic, daily, study of the Bible. It is easily demonstrable by practical experiment that the power of God in promoting growth is in the Bible as it is in no other book, nor in all other books taken together. Every one who has tried it has found in the Bible milk for babes and meat for those who are full age, the finest of the wheat and honey out of the rock. A Christian who neglects the Bible, whatever else he may read,

can no more grow as he ought than a babe can grow without proper nutriment. On the other hand, whosoever having been born again will daily, prayerfully, and obediently study the Bible will grow in grace and in the knowledge of God and in likeness to God, even if every other book is neglected.

6. *The Bible possesses divine power to make those who rightly study it wise.* Any one can find near at hand conclusive evidence that the entrance of God's words as found in the Bible giveth light to individuals and to nations (Ps. cxix. 130). Who has not known men and women of most meager general culture, and yet of rarest wisdom? When the solution of this mystery was sought, it was found in the fact that though these men and women had not enjoyed the advantages of reading many books, they had pondered much the one book. It is indisputable that there is more of the wisdom that is real and eternal in the Bible than in all the literature of the ages. The man who knows his Bible is a well-educated man, and the man who neglects the Bible is not a well-educated man, no matter what else he

has studied. The one who thoroughly studies his Bible, even if he does not study any other book, will know more of real wisdom, the wisdom that counts for eternity as well as time, wisdom that this perishing world needs to know, wisdom for which countless hungry hearts are starving to-day, than the man who reads all other books and neglects the Bible. How often in the history of the world men of culture, men of science, men of philosophy, men of genius, have sat at the feet of the man of one book, the Bible, and learned wisdom from him. The greatest man in the religious world to-day, the man who wields the mightiest influence, the man before whom theologians, ecclesiastics, and metaphysicians have to give way, the man who exerts mighty influence even in educational circles, is a man utterly unversed in the wisdom of the schools, but who knows the Bible. The Bible possesses a power that is altogether unique and manifestly divine to make men wise.

7. *The Bible possesses divine power to bring peace to conscience-stricken, anguish-riven, and care-burdened hearts.* The true God is "the

God of peace." He only can give peace that is deep, abiding, real, eternal. There is one chosen instrument by which He works His wondrous peace in the soul; that instrument is the Bible. Jesus proved that His voice was the voice divine by saying to tempest-tossed Galilee, "Peace, be still," and "there was a great calm." The Bible proves that its voice is the voice divine in a similar way. It says to the raging heart, "Peace, be still," and again there is "a great calm." Nothing in human experience is more certain than that the Bible has a power, peculiar to itself, of imparting peace to the heart of man. Who that has dealt with men could not multiply instances of this? One verse of the Bible brought peace to a woman who for fourteen years had been a conscience-hunted and remorse-haunted wanderer on the face of the earth. Another woman who was burdened by such cares, and broken-hearted over such sorrows as come to but few, in a moment's time found peace through another verse of Scripture. A man of exceptional education and brilliant abilities, but tortured with an agony that had driven him to attempt suicide five

times, found through another verse of Scripture a peace so wonderful that this peace has been overflowing ever since to many, many others. These are but a few of countless illustrations in the experience of the writer in applying the Bible to tormented hearts. Nothing from Emerson, or Carlyle, or Ruskin, or Marcus Aurelius, or Epictetus, or Seneca, or Socrates, or Buddha, or Confucius, or Mohammed, or any one else would have produced a like effect. There is one book that has power to produce peace in any heart that will listen, believe, obey: that book is the Bible.

8. *The Bible possesses divine power to produce joy.* Joy that is pure, deep, real, abiding, eternal, is from God. He gives it, maintains it, increases it, through the Bible. There is no gladness comparable to that which comes through meditation upon and acceptance of the words recorded in the Bible. The saddest man I ever met became one of the happiest men I ever knew through being introduced by me to the Bible and its contents. A year or so ago I met a physician who was leading an aimless, joyless, life. He was

induced to become a student of the Bible. I now meet him almost every day, when home. His face is always radiant, and when he speaks to me, as he usually does, it is always some story of the joy with which God has filled his heart through the study of the Bible. Is there any other book or books which I could have set him to studying with the same results? Jeremiah's experience is being repeated by thousands daily: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (Jer. xv. 16). There is in the Bible a power to produce such a joy as God alone can give, a joy entirely different than comes from any human or earthly source. The power of God is in the book.

The Bible possesses divine power in still other directions. It begets patience in those who are being tried, it comforts those who are in any sorrow, it awakens hope that never falters, it safeguards against all the errors of false teachers and wiles of the devil. But enough has been said. If there is anything capable of scientific demonstration by actual experiment it is that the power of God is in



the Bible in a way that it is in no other book. The only way any one can question it is by ignoring facts of daily occurrence that are open to the observation of anybody.

The Bible is of divine origin, it possesses divine authority, it displays divine power. Happy, then, is the man who ponders daily its wonderful words, who believes all that it teaches, who puts into practice its heaven-born precepts, who cherishes the hopes which God, who cannot lie, has promised in it. There can be no mistake more inexcusable and fatal than to doubt, disobey, or neglect the Bible.