

# HOW WE GOT OUR BIBLE And WHY WE BELIEVE IT IS GOD'S WORD

by

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

### UNITY OF THE BIBLE

VERY often we fail to realize that the Bible is not a book, but a library. The word "*Bible*" really suggests that, if we happen to know that while it is now applied to one book it comes from a Greek term meaning "*the books*" - *ta biblia*.

An edition of the Bible in various volumes, with one allotted to Genesis, another to Exodus, and on through the Bible, helps us to realize that it is a library, not merely a volume. Yet notwithstanding all these sixty-six books, there is a real unity running through it from Genesis to Revelation, constituting one of the most impressive features connected with our belief in the Bible as the Word of GOD.

1. The Fact of Unity - This unity can be realized all the more clearly if we first think of the variety of the Bible.

- There is variety of contents - history, theology, philosophy, poetry, counsel, aspiration, prediction.
- There is variety of authorship - prophet, priest, king, annalist, apostle, evangelist.
- There is variety of circumstances - differences of time, place, country, purpose, destination.

The sixty-six books are the work of at least thirty-six to forty authors, and cover certainly sixteen centuries. And yet the Bible, though so varied, is essentially one, and possesses one predominant idea.

- The Old Testament is the product of one country, though stretching over a long period of time.
- The New Testament is the product of several countries, but extending over a short time.

*The Old is to the New as the foundation is to the structure, and the New to the Old as the building is to the base.*

The GOD of Genesis and the GOD of Matthew are the same, only with the two complementary aspects of transcendence and immanence.

- In the Old Testament we have GOD in Himself as supreme, while in the New we have GOD in CHRIST as. our Saviour.
- In the Old Testament man is seen in himself as a sinner. In the New he is seen in CHRIST as saved.

To quote some familiar words, "In the Old the New is concealed (latent), and in the New the Old is revealed (patent)."

2. The Unity of Purpose - The one purpose of the Bible from beginning to end is to record GOD's religion of redemption.

Dr. M. G. Kyle once helpfully stated this by pointing out that:

- In the Patriarchs we have the promise of redemption; in the time of the Judges,
- The Providence which was leading to redemption; in the period of the monarchy,
- The prophecies of redemption; in CHRIST the Person who wrought redemption;
- In the Acts and Epistles the preaching of redemption;
- In Revelation the prediction which was the outcome of redemption.

In view of this great purpose it may be said that the Old Testament is a revelation of outward forms developing inward principles, while the New is a revelation of inward principles developing outward forms. The former is suited to moral and spiritual childhood, and the latter to moral and spiritual adulthood.

The Old Testament is thus a preparation of CHRIST for the Church and of the Church for CHRIST. The New is a revelation of CHRIST to the Church, and through the Church to the world.

3. The Unity of Subject - It is a familiar story, but is worth repeating, that the late Dr. A. J. Gordon, of Boston, on one occasion was in his study with some of his children, and gave them a puzzle, one of those made of different sized pieces of wood, which have to be properly fitted together. He went out and came back unexpectedly soon afterward, when to his surprise, he found the puzzle already completed.

He asked his children how they had managed to do it so soon, and one of them replied: "We saw a picture of a man on the back and this helped us to know where the pieces were to go." And so, as it has often been pointed out, there is a picture of a man, the man CHRIST JESUS, anticipated in the Old Testament, and realized in the New, and this gives unity to the Book.

CHRIST is thus the key to the whole Bible, and gives it its historical and spiritual unity. The following unity which covers the whole Bible has been suggested and is well worth consideration:

1. Genesis to Deuteronomy - *Revelation*.
2. Joshua to Esther - *Preparation*.
3. Job to Song of Solomon - *Aspiration*.
4. Isaiah to Malachi - *Expectation*.
5. Matthew to John - *Manifestation*.
6. Acts to Epistles - *Realization*.
7. Revelation - *Culmination*.

Of course these are only to be understood quite generally, but they are sufficiently accurate to reveal the essential unity.

4. The Unity of Theme - It is said on good authority that every piece of rope in the British Navy has a red thread running through it, so that it may be safeguarded against theft. Wherever that rope is cut the red thread can be seen.

In the same way there is a "red thread" running through the Bible, and wherever we examine it, we see indications of that "thread" in the unity of theme running from Genesis to Revelation.

The "red thread" is only another expression for the Cross of CHRIST.

- In the Old Testament that Cross is promised in prophecy and pictured in sacrifice and personal types (Acts 8:34, 35).
- In the Gospels it appeared gradually in the teaching of CHRIST, and was at length provided in the event on Calvary (John 1:29).
- In the Acts the Cross is proclaimed in sermons and explanations (2:23; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 7:52; 10:39,40; 23:29, 30).
- In the Epistles it is proved in various ways, and shown in its theological and practical bearings (Ephesians 1:7).
- In Revelation it is praised as theme of the glorified saints whose one song is "**Worthy the Lamb that was slain**" (5:6; 13:8).

5. The Unity as seen in the Symmetry - This symmetry is characteristic both of the literary structure and also of the spiritual teaching of the Bible. The shortest expression of it is that in the Old Testament we have Moses and the prophets, and in the New, CHRIST and his apostles. Extending this somewhat further, we may notice that the Pentateuch is to the Old Testament what the Gospels are to the New, the foundation on which all else rests., so that it may be regarded as generally correct to say that the Pentateuch and Gospels are books of the revelation of GOD to man, and the rest of the Old and New Testaments are books of the realization of that revelation in man. This can be made clearer if put in tabular form.

1. Revelation (Pentateuch) - GOD to his people.
2. Realization (Rest of the Old Testament) - GOD in his people.

- (1) In outward expression. Historical books.
- (2) In inward experience. Poetical books.
- (3) In onward expectation. Prophetical books.

Taking the New Testament in the same way we have

1. Revelation (Gospels) - CHRIST to his Church.
2. Realization (Rest of the New Testament) - CHRIST in his Church.

- (1) In outward expression (History). Acts.
- (2) In inward experience (Doctrine). Epistles.
- (3) In onward expectation (Prophecy). Revelation.

There are other and fuller ways of seeing the wonderful symmetry of the Word of GOD, but these will suffice to show something of its wonderful unitary structure.

This unity is one of the unique features of the Bible that nothing in scholarship or anything else can destroy. Some words on this point were quoted in Chapter 6 from a great Methodist theologian, Dr. W. B. Pope.

Here is another statement from him:

"The unity of Scripture is a very strong credential in its favor as professing to be from GOD. It is one great vision, and its interpretation one: beginning and ending with the same paradise, with thousands of years of redeeming history between . . . One idea runs through the whole: the kingdom of GOD set up or restored in his Incarnate Son. To this idea authors of various ages and of various races contribute in harmony which never could be the result of accident or mere coincidence. Only the divine Power could have made so many men of different lands concert, yet without concerting, such a scheme of literature. If they had not asserted their inspiration of GOD, that hypothesis would have had to be invented to account for the facts and phenomena of their writings. But they have asserted it: the claim is bound up with every page of the Word they have left behind them."

All this inevitably compels the question as to how a unity of this kind is possible, and there is only one answer.

Some years ago while a tunnel was being constructed in London, five shafts were sunk, and ten sets of men worked toward each other from opposite directions. Ultimately the sets met in the middle of the tunnel at a depth of one hundred feet. They were working practically in the dark, but they fitted so well together when the tunnels met each other that every one could see there was a master-mind who had planned the whole thing.

And so the various writers of the Old and New Testaments were working separately, as it were, in a tunnel in the dark, and the apostle Peter tells us they did not know exactly the meaning of their own words (I Peter 1:11).

But by and by they met, and now that we have the Bible complete, the writers are seen to have worked together and to have dovetailed into one another, thus showing the presence and power of a master-mind, which is none other than that of the Holy Spirit of GOD.

Note - Further and fuller treatment can be seen in the writer's "*Methods of Bible Study*" \*

\* This book is posted on our site.

## QUESTIONS

1. What may the Bible properly be called? How is this suggested by the name "Bible"?
2. How may the Bible's unity be clearly realized?
3. What is the one purpose of the Bible throughout? In view of this, how may the two parts of Scripture be described?
4. What gives unity to the Bible? What is the key to it? How may this be shown graphically?
5. May it be said that there is a unity of theme running through the Bible? What is the theme? How may this be strikingly illustrated?
6. In what characteristic of the Bible is its unity seen? In what two respects is this characteristic observable?
7. What relation do the Pentateuch and the Gospels bear to the remainder of the Old and New Testaments?
8. What, therefore, may be properly asserted?
9. Write graphically the answer to the last question.
10. What does Dr. Pope assert with respect to inspiration?

~ end of chapter 7 ~

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