

A Preface by Frederick H. A. Scrivener  
to his “Annotated Paragraph Bible.” (1884 edition)

**THE BIBLE: A DIVINE REVELATION.**

The Bible (or “the Book”) is the name usually given to an ancient collection of sixty-six smaller volumes, comprising narratives, poetry, moral axioms, and religious discourses, written in Hebrew, Chaldee, and Greek, by many authors, at different times, during a period of more than fifteen hundred years. Exceedingly valuable as containing the most ancient writings, the most remarkable and best accredited histories, the sublimest poetry, and the noblest personal, social, and political morality in the world, it has peculiar and extraordinary claims on account of its professed ORIGIN and OBJECT,—declaring itself to be a Divine revelation, in which God is made known to us, in order that He may be honoured in the restoration of our fallen race to purity and happiness.

Whilst no one can deny that it is *possible* for the Creator to give to His intelligent creatures direct revelations respecting Himself and His will, His wisdom and benevolence render it highly *probable* that He should have made such communications, if they were necessary. And, when we consider the deep degradation of millions of heathen in every age and of every form of worship, the dismal uncertainty of the greatest pagan philosophers respecting the attributes and purposes of God, and the nature and destinies of the human race, as well as the entire failure of all modern theorists, though borrowing much from revelation, to construct any other system affording adequate motives to self-improvement, or sufficient consolation under inevitable suffering—we must be convinced that it was *essential* to the well-being of man that God should so speak to him.

The claim that is made for the Bible is that it is the word of God—the only and complete written revelation of the Divine will. In proof that it is so, we observe—

1. Its numerous books, written in different ages and countries by men of different ranks and classes—shepherds, fishermen, priests, warriors, statesmen, kings—all have *one* great subject; and, amidst numerous diversities of form, style, and manner of thought, are pervaded by the same ideas, which are gradually developed, with no real contradictions, yet with such circumstantial variations as disprove the possibility of collusion; clearly showing that *one mind*, through more than fifteen hundred years, must have been engaged upon it.

2. The description which it gives of *man’s state*, however opposed to his self-flattering views, exactly accords with what he sees passing around him and within him; so that the more closely any one scrutinizes the thoughts, desires, and motives of his own heart, the more will he be convinced that the Bible proceeds from One who knows all the hidden secrets of his heart, and gives a far more accurate account of his disposition and character than he himself could have done:—while the representation which it contains of the *character of GOD*, being altogether unlike and infinitely superior to any ideas of Him which fallen man ever formed, evidently could not have originated in his mind, but must have been communi-

cated to him from a higher Being. In the life of the Redeemer especially, human excellences are delineated which no biographer had ever attributed to his hero; and which are not less striking for their naturalness and reality than for their perfect agreement with the dictates of enlightened conscience.

3. All that the Bible discloses respecting the *moral government of God*, and human responsibility, and the connexion between our present conduct and our future destiny, is in perfect accordance with the constitution of Nature and the order of Providence—as manifested in the punishments and rewards which even now follow virtue and vice, in their effects upon men’s physical and mental constitution and outward circumstances—in the pleasure bestowed or the pains inflicted by conscience—in the approbation or contempt of others, and in the retributions of domestic and of civil life:—all of which sufficiently prove that, even in the present degenerate and disordered world, the Divine administration is on the side of the righteous; and amply justify the conclusion that, as this book declares, virtue, militant here, will be triumphant hereafter; and that the first-fruits of God’s moral government which are perceptible now are the sure signs of its future perfection in the world to come.

4. The *plan of salvation* which it reveals, through the mediation of the Son of God, is altogether beyond the limits of human invention or conjecture; while, at the same time, it affords a matchless display of holiness and love in indissoluble union, which fully accords with our most enlightened notions of the Divine attributes, and can easily be conceived to produce effects upon the welfare and happiness of the whole universe far beyond our present powers of knowledge or comprehension. And not less does the wonderful *adaptation* of this scheme of mercy to the condition of man prove that it proceeded from the Author of his nature; for it meets all the exigencies of the case—awakening conscience and satisfying its demands—supplying motives of irresistible force to holiness—providing influences fully adequate to the moral renovation of every human being, whatever be his character, condition, or circumstances—and giving solid peace to the mind; as is remarkably illustrated by the fact that no instance is on record, or can be produced, of any sincere believer in the religion of the Bible who, in the prospect of dissolution, ever repented of his faith.

5. The *moral teachings* of the Bible, which fully accord with the fainter light of natural religion, bespeak its Divine origin. The religion which it reveals is spiritual and holy, requiring universal moral rectitude, and extending to the inward principles and motives of human conduct—not overlooking the outward forms, but valuing them only as they are expressions of the internal spirit; unlike all human religions, which have respect to the garb and manners of piety rather than to its heart and soul. Among numberless illustrations of the moral dignity of the Bible may be instanced its truthfulness and its goodness—its *truthfulness*, as seen in the fearless exhibition of truths the most unwelcome to human selfishness, pride, and prejudices—its candid forewarnings of the trials and sufferings incident to true piety in the present world—and its faithful delineation of good men, whom it nowhere describes as perfect, although it presents them as sincere, holy, and devoted disciples of a perfect system of truth and duty; and its *goodness*, as mani-

fested in the spirit of love and kindness which breathes through every part of this book—its solicitude for the young—its sympathy for the poor, the oppressed, and the suffering—and its benevolent regard for classes of the human family whom every other system of religion overlooks and despises.

6. Another evidence of the truth of Scripture is found in its perfect agreement with *personal experience*. It declares, for example, that the fruit of righteousness is ‘quietness and assurance for ever’—that sincere believing prayer to God is ever answered, either in the gift of the blessing asked, or of some greater—that obedience to the Divine precepts is followed by inward joy, even though it may lead to outward suffering: in a word, it describes the history and experience of all Christians, and, with no less accuracy, those of the ungodly; and the description, in each case, is found to be true. The Bible is thus incessantly proving itself to be the word of unerring and ever-living truth.

7. The *effects* of the Bible, aided by the promised Spirit of God, upon those who believe it, are such as no other book was ever known to produce; altering entirely the character and conduct, producing eminent virtue, supplying extraordinary consolation, and especially giving birth to expansive and self-denying benevolence. So that if a person “of entire impartiality, of sound mind and holy disposition, should be shown the two companies of those who have *received* and those who have *rejected* the Scriptures; and should compare the seriousness, learning, patient investigation of truth, solid judgment, holy lives, and composure in a dying hour, without unmanly terror or indecent levity, of the one company, with the character and conduct of the other, he would be induced to take up the Bible with profound veneration, and the strongest prepossession in its favour.”—*Scott*. It has also widely diffused a vastly beneficial influence wherever it has been known; improving the moral and social state of the world to such a degree as to make its own accounts of the depravity of former times, though corroborated by many ancient writers, and by the existing practices of the dark parts of the earth, appear almost incredible; while all other professed revelations have not only proved utterly worthless for the purpose of ameliorating the condition, or reforming the character of those who have most heartily received them, but have cherished and called into action the most depraved principles of the human heart.

To these might be added (beside the whole body of external evidences) many other marks of moral beauty and Divine wisdom in the word of God: its variety combined with its unity; its brevity, and yet its inexhaustible fulness; the consistency and harmony which exist between its several portions, as seen in the mutual relations of the Old and New Testaments—the mutual connexions of the historical, poetical, and didactic books—the exact correspondence of the types under the law with the substance under the Gospel, and of predictions in the prophets with their fulfilment in the person and work of the Saviour; and the complete subordination of all that is merely personal, national, or temporary, to the higher interests of universal and eternal truth and goodness.

It should also be remembered, that if this volume be not a revelation from heaven, there is no other document in the world which can substantiate its pretension to be such; so that we are left in darkness as to the origin or the destiny of the

human race, the whole history of the world is unexplained, and man himself, with all his noble powers and endowments, will appear to have existed in vain.

Such are a few of the reasons which are sufficient to satisfy every honest inquirer that the Scriptures are not a merely human production, but “given by inspiration of God.” But a practical belief of the Gospel usually rests upon more simple grounds even than these. A man who has just views of the character of God, and of himself, will accept the Saviour here offered to him, just as a drowning man will lay hold of the arm that is stretched out to draw him to the shore; and, in proportion as the heart and conduct are influenced by these doctrines, will the understanding be opened to perceive their perfect fitness, unquestionable truth, and surpassing glory.