

The Supernatural Book

by A.B. Simpson

The Bible is a supernatural book that has survived the attacks of its enemies and has transformed the lives of millions of people around the world.

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:23

Topics: "Authority of Scripture", "The Supernatural Nature of the Bible"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the supernatural nature and supreme authority of the Bible, arguing that it stands apart from all other literature and has survived countless attacks throughout history. He illustrates the Bible's enduring power through various examples, including the miraculous events it records, its prophetic accuracy, and the transformative influence it has on individuals and societies. Simpson warns against the dangers of compromising the Bible's authority and encourages believers to embrace it fully as the Word of God that lives and abides forever. He concludes by urging the faithful to love, believe, and live out the teachings of the Scriptures, as they are the ultimate source of truth and hope.

Transcript

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which lives and abides forever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away: but the word of the Lord endures forever." (1 Peter 1: 23-25.)

There is no testimony that needs to be more emphatically pressed upon the hearts of men today than the inspiration and supreme authority of the Word of God. The malignity of Satan and the pride of human culture are striving as never before to eliminate the supernatural from the Holy Scriptures and change the Book of God into a mere collection of ancient writings, saved out of the wreck of the world's literature.

The Bible stands apart from all other books, and has survived and will survive all the attacks of its enemies. It is like the electric torch that shines over the water of New York Bay, struck by the wing of many a seabird that dashes against it in its reckless flight, but still shining on unmoved while the foolish and reckless assailant falls bleeding and wounded at its feet.

It is an anvil which has worn out many a hammer of hostile criticism, while the anvil still remains unshaken amid the wreck of all that have assailed it.

It stands above all other books in a supreme and sublime isolation. "Bring me the Book," said Sir Walter Scott to his son-in-law, when he was dying. As Lockhart asked him, "What book, Sir Walter," his simple answer was, "There is but one -- the Bible."

When Alexander Duff was on his voyage to India with a large quantity of excellent baggage, including a splendid library of more than eight hundred volumes, the ship on which he was sailing was wrecked off the Cape of Good Hope, and when the rescued passengers reached the shore the only thing of all his baggage that was saved was a Bible that the waves had washed upon the sands. As he picked it up and removed the wrapping he found it was perfectly uninjured, and he was so deeply touched with the incident that he opened it and read some of its precious promises to the little company that stood around him on the shore. All his splendid books had perished, but the Bible remained as the only salvage from the wreck. To him it was a beautiful figure of that which afterward became the object of his life, that the Bible was the only book that would remain out of the world's literature, and the only book which was worth giving to India, the land for which he was going forth to live and die.

All the literature of the ages must perish in the flight of time, but, like Duff's rescued Bible, God's Word will live and survive the wreck of ages, and also give to those that embraced it an immortality as glorious as its own.

It is very sad and humbling to see the tendency among so many of those who ought to be the defenders and the teachers of this holy volume to win a little cheap popularity and wear the reputation of higher culture by joining in the ranks of those who, if they do not reject it altogether, will compromise its supremacy and question its infallible authority. The Bible is either everything or nothing. Like a chain which depends upon its weakest link, if God's Word is not absolutely and completely true, it is too weak a cable to fix our anchorage and guarantee our eternal peace. Thank God, we have reason to accept it as the supernatural revelation of the supernatural God, the word not of man, but the Word of God that lives and abides forever.

It has survived the assaults of its critics as the ages have gone by, and, while not claiming to teach philosophy and science, yet even philosophy and science with all their progress have not been able to establish a single argument against its credibility. While the so-called science of one generation has challenged it, the advanced knowledge of the next generation has but confirmed it.

The time was when the first chapter of Genesis was supposed to contradict the established facts of science by teaching that light was created in the beginning, while the sun and the other heavenly bodies were not created until the fourth day. But a few years later God led science to discover the spectroscope, and with it the fact that light did exist before the sun, and that Moses was in perfect accord with the real facts of nature.

Reverent scholarship is finding out every day that even in the very allusions of God's Word to the sublime facts of nature there are hidden harmonies with the great truths which science is only now discovering, and when Job spoke of the sweet influence of the Pleiades and David sang in the nineteenth Psalm of the light speaking, they were really teaching some of the deepest facts and latest discoveries of the majestic sciences of optics and astronomy. Out of every conflict this divine Book will come forth vindicated and victorious.

Like some tall cliff that lifts

its awful form,
Swells from the vale and midway
leaves the storm,
Though round its breast the rolling
clouds are spread,
Eternal sunshine settles
on its head.

Let it suffice to bring five witnesses to the supernatural character and supreme authority of the Word of God.

Miracles. This book appeals to us by a supernatural test. It claims as its credentials the superhuman power of its witnesses. It appeals to the infinite Creator to certify to its message by the works which are known to be beyond the power of any created agent. The stock objection to miracles which has become famous through the writings of David Hume is that a miracle is contrary to the uniformity of nature and therefore cannot be true, because we are bound to believe the uniform testimony of nature against any single testimony that seems to contradict it. This argument is absolutely as weak and foolish as our experience of nature is limited and partial.

An explorer told a chief to the Upper Congo about the ice of our northern climates, and assured him that he had seen rivers completely frozen over and water become as solid as stone. "Such a thing is contrary to all the experience of nature," replied the chief, and he laughed him to scorn. Such a thing had never been heard of by him or his fathers, or any of the neighboring chiefs, or, in fact, anybody in Central Africa. But his little world was but a segment of a vaster circle.

So David Hume's experience and the experience of the world as he had traced it and observed it was by no means conclusive as to the complete facts even of nature itself. There was a larger circle that he had not compassed, and within that circle the facts of miracles are as real as the facts of the ordinary operations of nature on the lower plane. In fact, some day we shall probably find that even miracles are but the operation of the higher laws on a divine plan which we have not understood, that it is the letting down for a moment of the forces of that spiritual realm which some day shall be our natural sphere.

But the facts themselves when demonstrated by satisfactory evidences are conclusive seals and attestations of the truth of the testimony which appeals to God through these credentials. Christ distinctly appealed to the works that He did as the evidences of His divine character and the truth of His teachings, and we cannot imagine God, if He be a holy God, answering this appeal and bearing witness to His testimony if it were not true.

The maker and custodian of the great clock in Strasbourg Cathedral had a grave misunderstanding with the authorities of the cathedral, and finding them unwilling to yield he quietly touched a spring in the tower and the clock stopped moving. The people wondered, questioned, complained and protested. The authorities employed mechanics and experts and skilled artisans in vain. Nobody could understand the works or make the clock go until at last they were obliged to appeal to the maker and yield to his terms,

and then he quietly touched the spring again, and the whole mechanism began to move. Because he was the maker he could arrest it and he could restore its operations.

And so there is but one Hand that can suspend the mighty wheels of nature's complicated mechanism, and there is but one Hand that can restore the power when interrupted. And when we see that Hand put forth to close the heavens at the word of Elijah, and then to open the brazen skies and send forth the copious showers at the same prophetic word, we know that He is bearing witness to the word of His servant. When we see the waves stilled, the sick healed, the dead raised, the very Son of God Himself come forth from the sealed tomb, with the distinct affirmation that these are the very credentials claimed by the witnesses who have given to us this Word, what but obstinate and inveterate blindness can doubt that this is indeed the authorized message of heaven, the Word of the living God?

Prophecy. The shrewdness of the human intellect may succeed in guessing with some degree of probability about the future. But there is an infinite distance between the boldest and wisest guesses of heathen oracles or human sages and the clear, decided predictions of the Holy Scriptures.

The criteria of prophecy are exceedingly simple and obvious.

First, the event predicted must be at a sufficient distance in the future.

Second, the prediction must be explicit, and marked by points of identification about which there can be no mistake, such as locality, circumstances, names, and so forth.

Third, there must be no apparent cause or train of circumstances that might bring about the event in question which could be known to the author of the prediction.

Fourth, the fulfillment must be open, public and sufficiently witnessed to render all deception impossible.

These are but a few of the tests of prophecy which distinguish them from the guesses of human wisdom, and in these respects the Scripture prophecies shine in the meridian sunlight of truth.

Let us look for a moment at three classes of prophecies. First, there are the prophecies concerning the nations and political systems of the world. Centuries before the time of their fulfillment a number of prophetic witnesses, including such men as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel, foretold the actual order of the world's great empires, the rise and fall of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the political and ecclesiastical systems that were to come out of Rome. A perfect panorama of the political future of the world was laid out, and all the centuries since have been literally fulfilling it. Now, how could any human guess have ever foreshadowed these stupendous results? The events were too far in the distance to render them probable, and the fulfillment has been open in the face of the universe.

The same conclusion would be reached if we had time to take up in detail special prophecies concerning the fall of Nineveh, the capture of Babylon, the career of Cyrus, the history of nations like Edom, Egypt and Tyre, in the light of which we see a divine presence and exact fulfillment.

The second class of prophecies is concerning the Jews. As long ago as the time of Moses and down through the whole Old Testament, there is a clear line of prophecy pointing out the great facts of their national history, their supremacy among the nations, their fall under the power of the Gentile conquerors, their captivity on account of their sins, their rejection of the Messiah, their dispersion among all nations, their preservation distinct from all other peoples, their restoration ultimately to their own land.

How manifestly all this meets the test already given. There was nothing likely to lead up to that. The fulfillment has been open as the day, and so marked has been their providential history that when the great statesman was asked by one of the sovereigns of Europe what argument he could give for the truth of Christianity his simple answer was, "The Jews, your Majesty, the Jews."

The third great class of prophecies are those respecting the Lord Jesus Christ. How explicitly, how exactly the ancient prophecies point out all the circumstances attending His first and second advent; His name; His birth of a virgin mother; the very place of His birth -- Bethlehem; His rejection by His countrymen; His life of humility and suffering; His betrayal for thirty pieces of silver; His crucifixion and all the attending circumstances of His death; His resurrection; His coming again. So complete was the chain of Messianic prophecy that the evangelist stops to note at every stage of the last sad drama of His agony how each incident that happened was "that the Scriptures might be fulfilled." So perfect is the picture that we could construct a biography of Christ from the Old Testament prophecies alone. Who can answer this mighty weight of prophetic testimony? Who can challenge this divine vindication of God's supernatural Book? Who can hesitate to say with holy veneration and humble faith, "For ever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven."

The life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ. The story of Jesus is the mightiest proof of the truth of the Gospels. Such a story is absolutely without any explanation unless it be literally true. Such a character is to us a miracle, and for any human mind to conceive it, invent it, to unfold it in these records would be a literary achievement so stupendous that the author would deserve to be immortalized as himself divine.

Who conceived this marvelous ideal? Whose brain originated this stupendous Book, if it was but a book? As Rousseau has well said, the creation of such a fiction would have been a greater miracle than to believe the fact itself to be true.

Dr. Fisher has forcibly said that this character is original. The world had nothing like it before. It is a blending of all the elements at once of gentleness and strength, of intellectual force and moral perfection, or self-surrender and yet sublime dignity and self-respect. There is no weakness about it, and yet there is no hardness, no selfishness, no pride, no despotic ambition to aggrandize Himself at the expense of others like all the heroes of human history. It is evidently a sinless and spotless and perfect character. There is not a single failure anywhere. The ideal is sustained throughout consistently with itself, and even in the very tragedy of His death there is a moral sublimity and a triumph of character greater even than earthly success.

Then it is to be noticed that this character is not a study of literary skill, wrought up with any preconceived plan to create an ideal, but it is developed incidentally out of a thousand common occurrences in actual life, unfolding day by day and evidently as unforeseen by the writers as by us. It all grows up naturally out of facts as they develop and it bears upon its very surface the impression of simplicity, genuineness and absolute reality. No man can candidly read these Gospel narratives and not feel that he is standing in the presence of a Life that is supernatural and divine, and the book that records it must be the Word of God.

Even the great Napoleon remarked, "I think I understand somewhat of human nature, and I tell you all these were men, and I am a man, but not one is like Him. Jesus Christ was more than a man. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself founded great empires, but upon what did the creation of our genius depend but on force. Jesus alone founded His empire upon love, and to this day millions would die for Him. The Gospel is no mere book, but a living creature, with a power which conquers all that possess it.

Here lies the Book of books upon this table."

The influence of this Book. It has revolutionized human society. It has civilized the nations that have accepted it. It is the secret of the greatness and power of the Protestant nations. It goes into the heathen populations, and lo, the cannibals of the Fiji Islands are transformed into gentle Christians, the savage Indian becomes a peaceful disciple of Christ, the selfish Chinaman develops into a heroic martyr, and the degraded African rises into the noblest type of manhood. The polygamist gives up his wives; the sorcerer gives up his superstitions; thousands of men and women become outcasts from their homes and often martyrs for their faith; and the whole phase of human society is stamped with the uplifting impress and the heavenly influence of the Book of God. Skepticism is well enough to laugh and talk about, but, as Voltaire once said when his infidel friends were discussing their theories at his dining table, "Hush, gentlemen, until the servants are gone. If they believed as we do none of our lives would be safe."

Experimental evidence. The experience of the child of God, and the internal evidence which it brings to every heart that receives it on its own terms with obedience and trust is the final evidence of the supernatural nature of this Book. Like the Jewish tabernacle which was very coarse and common looking on the outside, but whose beauties could only be seen from within, this blessed Book must be loved to be understood and appreciated. It speaks to the spirit of the child of God with an assurance that awakens the spontaneous sensibilities of his renewed being, and answers like the people of Samaria, "We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world."

If you want to know that this Book is true, meet it on its own terms. Take it to your heart, read it with simplicity and candor, test it by obedience, and you will find it is all it claims to be.

In a city where I once was a pastor there was a brilliant lawyer who, with his young wife, attended my ministry. She was a devoted Christian. He was a notorious skeptic, and was recognized as the leading free thinker of the community. I knew it was vain to argue with him, but many hearts were praying for him. At last this lovely girl died. A few days after her death he sent for me to his office, and in a very frank way immediately began to tell me that he had just become a Christian. I was quite surprised, and asked him how it happened. "Well," he said, "I have read everything on the subject for years, and I never could reach a conclusion. As I read one side of the argument I was partly convinced, but when I read the other the balance turned, and I never seemed quite able to decide between the two. The brain was not strong enough to balance these weights, and so I have been all my life in a state of honest indecision. But while my wife lived with me I saw in her something which I did not possess, and something that I knew to be real; and when she died I saw that it was worth all that I possessed, and in the agony of my bereavement I suddenly found myself one day praying to her God. Instantly my reason came to me and protested, and I said to myself, why you are praying to somebody you don't believe in; but before I could stop it the prayer had got into heaven and God had answered it, and something came to my heart that I had never felt before. It was the touch of the supernatural Presence, and it was so exquisite and comforting that I just kept on praying; God kept on answering until this very moment, and although I cannot explain it, I cannot justify it by my reason, yet I know that it is true, and I know that it is God and I am a Christian, not through my head, but through my heart."

Beloved, that is the secret of faith. That is the supreme test. Dare to test it.

Oh, make but trial of His word,

Experience will decide

How happy they and only they

Who in His truth confide.

When you cannot understand the Bible through your brain take it in your bosom, press it to your heart, bring to it your sorrow, your sin, your need; and you will know it is true because it has searched you, it has converted you, and it has satisfied you.

A blind girl lay dying and her paralyzed fingers had ceased to be able to read by touch the raised letters of her precious Bible. With a sad cry she dropped it, and she said, "My precious Bible, I cannot feel any more the touch of your precious promises." Then in an impulse of passionate love she pressed it to her lips to say goodbye, when suddenly she gave a great cry of joy, and she said, "I can read it still; I can feel it with my lips," and she pressed it again and again, page after page, to her sensitive lips as she drank in its consolations, and went to sleep with her head pillowed upon its heavenly promises.

Beloved, when all other senses fail, you can read and understand the Bible with your love. It is not a Book to talk about. It is not a Book to play with. It is not a Book for intellectual discussions or brilliant exhibitions of our exegetical acuteness. It is a Book to love! It is a Book to translate into living copies and holy example.

"Each of us is either a Bible or a libel." Let us reverence it. Let us believe it. Let us love it. Let us live it. Let us give it to a perishing world.

Eternal are Your mercies, Lord;

Eternal truth attends Your Word;

Your praise shall sound from shore to shore,

Till suns shall rise and set no more.

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