

## Problems in Composition: Who Wrote the Books of the Bible?

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Earlier in our study the observation was made that men wrote the books of the Bible . . . holy men of God, writing as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. In evangelical circles it has been enough that when the Bible said someone was the author of a particular book, Bible readers accepted that as the truth. If no author was assigned in the Bible, tradition could be consulted and almost any reasonable opinion could be offered; for example, the book of Hebrews. Inspiration was required for the place the book held in Scripture, but the knowledge of a specific author was not necessary.

But in more recent times scholars began to doubt the authenticity of the Bible on several lines. One of these was in the area of claimed authorship. To liberal scholars it appeared that the claims of the Bible were unbelievable, and they sought to find its true sources through an analysis of the literature and literary forms contained in it. Literary criticism was not unique to the Bible in the *age of rationalism*, and what these scholars did to the Bible was similar to the approach of men of literary interest to some of the *great literature of our time*.

Almost everyone thinks that Shakespeare wrote Hamlet; but in 1887 an American lawyer, Ignatius Donnelly, published a book entitled *The Great Cryptogram*. Studying Shakespeare's First Folio, Donnelly professed to have found a cryptic cypher, a system of acrostic forms, that gave the name "Bacon" (for Sir Francis Bacon) as author. The supposed cypher failed to