

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION Chapter 13

THE HOLY BIBLE MORE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS—2

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Transcript

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Chapter 13

THE HOLY BIBLE

MORE UNIQUE CHARACTERISTICS—2.

8. Its conciseness. Here is yet another remarkable feature which distinguishes the Bible from other books: though it be the most comprehensive of all, yet the most compact. Though it contains a complete library, having no less than sixty-six books within its covers, yet a small-print copy may be carried in one's pocket. Though there is here an amazing fullness, yet no excessive length. There is an abundance of matter wrapped up in a few words. An epitome of the heavens and earth, an account of the forming of this world into an habitable globe, the creation of its denizens, the making of man, the formation of woman, their state in Paradise, a description of the garden of Eden—are all condensed into two chapters which require but two pages! If "brevity" be "the soul of with," then here is the quintessence of wisdom. A vivid description of the fall of our first parents, how it was brought about, with the effects thereof; to which is subjoined the appearing of the Lord, their arraignment by Him, with their trial, sentence, and expulsion from the garden, are all given within the space of only twenty-four verses! So briefly narrated, yet all-sufficient to answer every purpose for which the revelation of the same is made to us. Within the space of seven chapters we have the creation and furnishing of the world, the apostasy of our first parents, the birth of Abel and Cain, an account of their worship of God, the murder of the former, and an enumeration of seven generations of the latter—with a description of 10 of the progenitors of Christ. In addition, we find in them an account of the wickedness of men, the announcement of God that He purposed to destroy the earth and the human race; His detailed instructions to Noah for the building of an ark, in which were to be preserved himself, his family, and representatives of all living creatures. Then we have described the coming of the flood, the destruction of the old world, and the salvation of all within the ark! All the wisdom of men could not have expressed and compressed subjects of such vast importance and interests within so brief a compass. Moses himself could not, unless he had been inspired by the Holy Spirit. No book besides the Bible contains so much in so short a space. The brevity of Scripture is beyond imitation. The

wisdom of God is most gloriously displayed in revealing so much in language so simple and so succinct. There is nothing within the wide range of human literature which in the least resembles this striking yet little noticed feature. The unique brevity of Holy Writ only becomes really apparent when we compare the biographies which men have written and the systems of religion which they have drawn up. The Jews have joined to the Scriptures their Talmud, to which they affix equal authority—the one followed by most of their rabbis consists of 12 folio volumes; while the Romanists receive with the same veneration the writings of "the fathers," the decisions of the "councils," the vast accumulations of synod edicts and papal decrees and bulls, and a mass of "traditions" respecting both faith and morals. Who among uninspired historians and narrators would or could have recorded the birth, life, ministry, miracles, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ in less than 1,200 lines? Who among them could have related the history of Christianity during the first thirty of its most memorable years within the space of thirty pages? For fullness and brevity, dramatic description yet terseness of language, for outlines of sermons, details of miraculous conversions, intervention of angels, all pictured with a few brief touches, there is nothing comparable to the Acts of the Apostles. What but the Divine Mind could have comprehended in so small a book as the Bible such an immense store of information and instruction? 9. Its Numerics. As the Creator has been pleased to provide an endless variety in Nature, which appeals to widely different tastes and temperaments both as it respects objects for the eye, sounds for the ear, scents for the nose and flavors for the palate, so He has deigned to supply many different kinds of evidence for the inspiration of His Word, which are suited to all kinds of minds. As one man prefers this dish or flower to that, so one investigator will be more impressed and convinced by a particular line of demonstration than another. It is with that fact in mind we have prepared this material and multiplied their divisions. All of them will not appeal with equal potency and pertinence to the same reader: what strikes one most forcibly may seem not at all interesting to another, while what one finds unimpressive may settle the matter for another. Thus with the argument we are about to expound. Some may deem it fanciful and unsatisfactory, while others will not only find it interesting and instructive, but weighty and conclusive. Our present argument may be briefly stated thus: as there are innumerable evidences of mathematical design in God's works of creation, we should naturally look for the same in His Word. If the One who "telleteth the number of the stars" (Ps. 147:4), who "bringeth out their host by number" (Isa 40:26), who "weigheth the waters by measure" (Job 28:25), should vouchsafe to grant the sons of men a written revelation, it is to be expected that it will bear similar evidences of numerical significance and exactitude. If the heavenly bodies move with such unflinching regularity that an eclipse can be calculated centuries in advance of its occurrence, and if all of our chronometers are set by the motion of the sun, which never varies a fraction of a second, then it is to be anticipated that similar phenomena will appear in the Holy Scriptures. Nor is such an expectation disappointed: rather does it receive abundant confirmation and illustration. Everywhere in the Bible there are to be found the same evidences of a supreme Mathematical Mind as appear to the careful observer in the material realm. Those marks of mathematical design are seen both in the general and in the particular. For example, 12 is the number of rule or government. Thus, the only theocracy or nation immediately governed by God, and in whose midst He set up His throne, comprised 12 tribes; and when Christ established His spiritual kingdom upon earth, He ordained 12 Apostles to be His ambassadors. Now both Scripture and common observation tell us that God has set in the heavens, "two great lights: the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night" (Gen. 1:16). In perfect accord with that fact, day and night alike have 12 hours, each hour consisting of 60 minutes (12 x 5), with 12 months for the year. From the remotest ages of antiquity astronomers have divided the stellar heavens into the "12 signs of the Zodiac"; so, too, the vast circle of the heavens has been divided into 360 degrees or 12 x 30. But why should 12 thus pervade the heavens? Why not 10 or fourteen? Man can give no reason. But Scripture

supplies the explanation: "the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4:26), and 12 is the number which stands for that! The very structure of the Bible evinces numerical design and arrangement. First we have the five books of the Pentateuch, like basal blocks. They are surmounted by the 12 historical books—Joshua to Esther. Next follow the five "poetical"—Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon. Then come the five major Prophets, succeeded by the 12 minor ones. Above these are the five historical books of the New Testament, then the 21 Epistles (by five writers!), and over all, like a crowning dome, the Apocalypse. It will be seen that five is the number which occurs most frequently, appearing conspicuously at four points: at the beginning of the Old Testament and at the beginning of the New Testament; the other two in the center of the Bible! Nor will the student of Scripture be surprised at this when he discovers that the numerical significance of that number is Divine grace. Hence five is the dominant number in the Tabernacle; and hence too, the five great offerings of Leviticus 1-6. "This mathematical law, pervading the Book, is at least a hint of the mathematical mind of the Author, who reveals the same regard to the symmetry of number and form in the material universe ("The Bible and Spiritual Life," A. T. Pierson). Before passing from the more general to the particular, let us point out that Bible numerics assure us of the integrity of the Canon of Scripture. How so? The very number of its books intimates the Canon is complete. The Old Testament has in it 39, or 3×13 , and three is the number of manifestation and 13 of apostasy: its dominant theme being the apostasy of man and of Israel. The New Testament has just 27 books, or the cube of three: $3 \times 3 \times 3$, and three is the number of God and of manifestation—God fully and finally manifested in the incarnate and risen Christ. Now take out a single book, or add one (like "Asher"), and that significance will disappear! But as it is in Nature, so with the Bible: its wonders and perfections, especially in minutiae, are only perceptible to the studious investigator. When examined under the microscope the flakes of snow and even the scales of the herring (as the writer recently saw for himself) are formed and arranged after perfect geometrical patterns. In like manner, the number of times a word or an object is found in the Bible is always in strict harmony with the meaning possessed by that numeral. As others before us have pointed out, four is the number of the world or earth. The fourth day of Genesis 1 saw the material creation completed—the fifth and sixth being devoted to furnishing and peopling the earth. It is divided into four quarters: north, east, south, west. It has four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. The fourth clause in the Family Prayer is, "Thy will be done on earth." Four Gospels present our Lord's earthly ministry. Five, which is $4 + 1$ (God coming to the aid of the creature), is the number of grace. The fifth day's work in Genesis 1 illustrates: "life" and "God blessed them" occurring, for the first time. When Joseph signified his peculiar favour unto the beloved Benjamin, "his mess was five times so much" as that of any of his brethren (Gen. 43:34), and while he provided change of raiment for them, he gave "five changes of raiment to Benjamin" (Gen. 45:22). The fifth clause in the Family Prayer is "Give us this day," etc. The 50th year was that of "jubilee." Six is the number of man, for he was made on the sixth day, and see Revelation 13:18. There were six cities of refuge for the manslayer (Num. 35:13). In the Bible there are six words for "man"—four in the Old Testament and two in the New. Our Lord was crucified by men and for men at "the sixth hour"! Seven, as is well known, is the number of perfection: how exceedingly striking, then, that in Matthew 1:17, the Holy Spirit informs us there were "14 generations" from Abraham to David, 14 from David to the Babylonian captivity, and 14 from the captivity till Christ: or 42 in all. And 42 is 7×6 : the 42nd generation from Abraham being the perfect Man! Stand in holy awe, my reader, before such Divine handiwork: Eight signifies a new beginning. It was Noah, "the eighth person" (2 Pet. 2:5), who stepped out of the ark onto the earth to begin a new order of things. Circumcision was to be administered on the eighth day (Gen. 17:12). On the eighth day Israel's priests entered upon their service (Lev. 8:33, and 9:1). On that day the leper was cleansed (Lev. 14:10, 11), and the Nazarite was restored (Num. 6:10). Just eight penmen were employed by God on the New Testament. Thirteen is the number of

revolt or apostasy: "Twelve years they served Chedorlaomer, and in the 13th year they rebelled" (Gen. 14:4). Note Esther 3:13! In Mark 7:21, 22, our Lord enumerated 13 features of man's apostate heart. The "dragon," the arch-apostate, is mentioned just 13 times in the New Testament. Much of the above has been culled from Numbers in Scripture, by E. W. Bullinger—unobtainable. The same meaning appears in their multiples. Thus, one of the significations of two is that of witness (John 8:17; Rev. 11:3), and 14 speaks of perfect or complete witness, as in Nehemiah 8:4, the 14 Epistles of Paul. Fifteen (5 x 3) is a manifestation of grace: 2 Kings 20:6; Leviticus 23:6, 34, 39. Ten is the number of responsibility (Gen. 18:22; 24:55; Ex. 34:28), and therefore when Christ graciously fed the multitude and they were required to partake in an orderly manner—"make them sit down by fifties [5 x 10] in a company" (Luke 9:14). Jude is the 26th book (13 x 2) in the New Testament and its obvious theme is apostasy, witnessing unto and against it: verses 4-8, 11-13, 24—a fitting prelude to the Revelation. When the Jews treated Paul as an apostate, they laid upon him "forty stripes save one"—39 or 13 x 3 (2 Cor. 11:24)! Thus, all through the Scripture numbers are not used haphazardly but with design. Not only so, but though they are employed by no less than 40 penmen, yet always with uniform precision; which can only be accounted for on the ground that all were inspired by one and the same Spirit. 10. Its reserve. Had the Bible been of human origin—a fraud passed on upon the world—exactly the opposite had been the case. When human writers take up matters of extraordinary interest they deal with them dramatically rather than prosaically, and in a manner which will appeal to lovers of the sensational. But there is nothing like that in the Scriptures: instead, a holy constraint rests upon its scribes. When secular writers arouse curiosity they endeavour to satisfy it, whereas the sacred penmen lift not a finger to remove the veil from off the mysteries of which they treat. They never draw upon the imagination, nor indulge in that speculation which is so prominent in the authors and disciples of all heathen religions. That can only be accounted for on the ground that the Holy Spirit suppressed their natural proclivities. The Divine inspiration of the Bible appears not only in what is said, but equally in what is not said. Its silences are as eloquent as its speech. No explanation is given of the modus of the three Persons in the Godhead—in marked contrast to the presumptuous reasonings of not a few theologians, who sought to be wise above what is written. How scanty the information furnished on many things upon which the human heart craves light! In the historical portions men and nations appear abruptly, raising the curtain of oblivion, stepping to the front of the stage for a brief moment, and then disappearing into the unknown. It is full of gaps which human authors would have filled in. How often we wish the Evangelists had been more communicative. Had they been left to their own wisdom, the Gospels had been much fuller and lengthier! No description is given of the bodily appearance of Christ: they say not a word about His stature, complexion, or features. What is yet more remarkable, except for one brief statement concerning Him as a boy of twelve, the first 30 years of our Lord's life are passed over in complete silence, which is very different from the fabled accounts of the Apocryphal writers! There is not the least gratifying of idle curiosity in the Bible, but a noticeable repressing of the same. Nothing is told us of the experiences of the soul—either redeemed or reprobate—immediately after death, and little about the Eternal State. The Scriptures are not for entertainment, but are given for practical and spiritual ends. While Holy Writ makes known many facts unto us, it does so no further than they contribute to the design of the Holy Spirit and are for our moral instruction. Very little information is furnished, and sometimes none at all, concerning the amanuenses of God—we do not even know who wrote the books of Ruth and Esther. No account is given of the closing hours of Peter, Paul and John. It is not thus with uninspired historians and biographers! How natural for the Apostle John to have spoken of our Lord's mother in terms of adulation, yet not a word does he utter which affords the least support to the sickly sentimentality and blasphemous idolatry of the Popish Mariolatry. Only once is she mentioned after Christ's ascension, and then at a prayer meeting: not as the object of supplication, but taking her place

among brethren and sisters as a supplicant (Acts 1:14)! Frequent mention is made in the Gospels of "the devils" or "demons," yet nowhere are we told anything about who or what they are. There are many matters of which we should welcome information, but the Bible is silent thereon, because such knowledge respected not our duty nor would it have promoted personal piety. But nothing concerning our well-being is omitted. An account is given of how the human race became infected with the virus of sin, but not a word on the origin of evil. 11. Its ingenuousness. Had the historical portions of the Old Testament been a spurious production, how vastly different had been their contents! Each of the books was written by a son of Abraham, yet nowhere do we find his posterity flattered. So far from extolling the virtues of the Jewish nation, it is uniformly portrayed as an ungrateful, rebellious, and sinful people. There is scarcely a book in the Old Testament which does not relate that which is most unfavorable and highly disgraceful to them. Nowhere do we find their bravery eulogized, and never are their victories ascribed either to their valor or military genius. Success is always attributed unto Jehovah, their God. In like manner, their defeats are referred unto Him, as withholding His power because their evil conduct had justly displeased Him. Their defeats are accounted for neither by misfortune nor bad generalship, but to their own wickedness restraining a holy God from showing Himself strong in their behalf. Now such a God is not the creation of the human mind, nor are such historians actuated by the common principles of human nature. Time after time Israel's subjugation by heathen nations is faithfully chronicled. The Jewish historians have also impartially recorded the numerous backslidings and spiritual declensions of their own people. One of the outstanding truths of the Old Testament is the unity of God, that beside Him there is none else, that all others are false gods, and that the paying of any homage to them is the sin of all sins. Yet the idolatry of Israel is frankly and repeatedly recorded. The guilt of some of their leading men is mentioned, as that of Aaron and Solomon. Nor is there the slightest attempt made to excuse such appalling wickedness: instead, it is openly censured and roundly condemned. Nor do the writers spare themselves or omit that which is to their discredit. Moses concealed not the reflection cast upon his own tribe (Gen. 34:30; 49:5), nor the incest of his parents (Ex. 6:20), or the rebellion of his sister (Num. 12:1). He failed not to set down his own faults and failings, but frankly tells us of his disinclination to respond to Jehovah's call (Ex. 4:10-14), his murmuring against God (Num. 11:11-14), his lack of faith after so many Divine interpositions on his behalf (Num. 10:12), and the Lord's displeasure against him because of his disobedience (Num. 27:12-14). Such unsparing fidelity is found not in those who are left free to follow the bent of their own hearts. The same unusual feature is found in the New Testament. John the Baptist is presented as a most eminent personage: miraculously born, the Lord's forerunner, accorded the high honour of baptizing Him. Where had human wisdom and sentiment placed him among the Saviour's followers? Surely, as the most distinguished and favored of His attendants, set at His right hand. Whereas he was granted no familiar discourse with Him, but was treated with apparent neglect, suffered to be cast into prison through no fault of his own, left there unvisited. See him harassed with unbelief, doubting whether or not He was the true Messiah. Had his character been the invention of fraud, nothing had been said of his lapse of faith. The same shocking unbelief is recorded of the Apostles, who not only basely deserted Christ in the hour of His crisis, but had no expectation of His rising from the dead—nay, when informed that He had done so, were full of skepticism. A spurious history had omitted such glaring blemishes. But the Bible characters are painted in the colors of truth and nature, and in the unrivalled honesty of its penmen we have yet another evidence that they wrote by Divine inspiration and not by natural impulse. 12. Its majestic tone. If God is the Author of the Bible we should naturally expect to find in it a loftiness of tone and majesty of diction which surpasses all human productions. And such is indeed the case, especially in those portions of it which more especially treat of the Divine perfections. Amidst great plainness of speech and homeliness of expression, adapted to that meanest capacity, there is often an elevation of spirit and grandeur of

language which not only command attention but fill with reverent awe. Thus, "Hear O heavens, and give ear O earth, for the LORD hath spoken" (Isa. 1:2). "The LORD reigneth, let the people tremble" (Ps. 99:1). It would be the height of presumption for any creature to speak thus, yet perfectly fitting for the Almighty to do so. When the Son of God became incarnate, the people who heard Him declared that, "He taught with authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:29), and the very officers sent to arrest Him testified, "never man spake like this Man" (John 7:46). The same qualities mark God's written Word. It possesses a sovereign majesty which is unrivalled and inimitable. Though the contents of the Bible are not presented pompously or bombastically, but calmly and with becoming dignity, there is yet an unmistakable elevation of style and an august solemnity of diction which is without parallel. God speaks therein and reveals the glory of His excellence. His supremacy, His omniscience, His holiness, His immutability, His faithfulness, His goodness and grace, are set forth in a manner worthy of Himself, yet at the same time admirably suited to our weakness. The most laborious efforts of scholars and rhetoricians are insipid in comparison with those passages which are particularly designed to convey to us due apprehensions of the One with whom we have to do. "He sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in" (Isa. 40:22). Yet, "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Isa. 40:11). We adduce but one other specimen. "O LORD my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Who coverest Thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain: Who layeth the beams of His chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds His chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind: Who maketh His angels spirits; His ministers a flaming fire: Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed forever. Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At Thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of Thy thunder they hasted away" (Ps. 104:1-7). Where shall we find in human compositions anything as chaste, so elevated, so sublime! 13. Its undesigned coincidences. Infidel challengers of the Scriptures and deniers of their Divine inspiration have shown some industry and ingenuity in gathering together apparent contradictions between different statements in the Bible. But such alleged contradictions are only apparent, and betray the ignorance and misapprehension of those who urge them. The men who present them are merely retailing old trivial objections, which have been refuted again and again. On the other hand, those who undertake the defense of the Bible may appeal to innumerable proofs not only of its general harmony but also of its detailed consistency and verbal precision. The veracity of Holy Writ is demonstrated by hundreds of undesigned coincidences in them, or the uncollaborated agreement of one part with another. Though the Bible has in it 66 books, written by 40 penmen, covering so many generations of the world, relating to widely different states of society, containing such a variety of matter upon so many different subjects, and abounding in supernatural incidents, yet it exhibits concord in all its parts, which becomes increasingly evident the more closely it is examined. Their consonance without collusion is too uniform to be accidental, and too incidental to have been mutually planned. That which gives greater force to this argument is its self-evident feature that the perfect agreement of all its writers is undesigned on their part. The closer their productions be scanned, the more is it manifest that their perfect unity was not studied but casual. This line of argument was developed at considerable length by Paley and later by J. I. Blunt, who fully evinced the minute agreement and yet unpremeditated concurrence of one writer with another. The value of such evidence cannot be overestimated. As Professor Blunt pointed out, "It does not require many circumstantial coincidences to determine the mind of a Jury as to the credibility of a witness in our courts even when the life of a fellow creature is at stake." When independent narrators describe an incident in detail and there is no discrepancy but perfect accord between their several accounts, we

logically conclude that they have related actual occurrences—the more so when there is no indication of conference or contrivance. We shall now condense a number of examples from those authors. After Joseph's brethren had cast him into the pit, we are told that, "they lifted up their eyes and looked, and behold a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt" (Gen. 37:25). Now this, by no means an obvious incident to have suggested itself, does appear to be a very natural one to have occurred. But what is more to our point, it tallies exactly with what we read of elsewhere, yet in a passage which has no reference whatever to the one just cited, namely, "Joseph commanded the physicians to embalm his father... and the Egyptians mourned three score and ten days" (Gen. 50:2, 3). It was the practice of the Egyptians to embalm their dead, and hence the Ishmeelites would find a ready market in Egypt for their spices! Again—when during the famine, Joseph possessed himself on the king's account of all the land of Egypt, "he did not buy the land of the priests" (Gen. 47:22)—as a specially favored class, they were exempted. In perfect accord is the fact that the final mark of the king's regard for Joseph was his giving him to wife, "the daughter of Potipherah the priest" (Gen. 41 :45)—showing that the priests were held in peculiar esteem by their monarch. "Moses gave. . . two wagons and four oxen unto the sons of Gershon, according to their service; and four wagons and eight oxen to the sons of Merari" (Num. 7:7, 8). Why twice as many to the one as to the other? No reason is expressly stated, yet if we turn to an earlier chapter—separated by sundry details on other matters—we discover for ourselves a satisfactory explanation: the sons of Gershon carried the lighter part of the tabernacle furniture (Num. 4:25), those of Merari the heavier (Num. 4:32, 33). Does cunning contrivance or truth lie behind that? "But he [Israel's king] shall not multiply horses to himself" (Deut. 7:16). The governors of Israel rode on "white asses (Judges 5:10, and cf. Joshua 15:18; 1 Sam. 25:23), and it was the asses and not the horses of Kish which were lost (1 Sam. 9:3). News of Absalom's death was brought to David by runners on foot (2 Sam. 18:21-23). Thus it appears quite incidentally in the history of Israel that for several centuries they had no horses—a coincidence of reality which had never occurred in a fiction. When praising the Lord for deliverance from their enemies, Deborah mentioned there was not "a shield or spear" among the Israelites (Judg. 5:8). Strange though that be, it fully accords with several other details found in that book. Ehud "made him a dagger" (3:16), Shamgar slew the Philistines "with an ox goad" (3:31), Jael had to improvise and use a tent pen, (4:21), Samson searched in vain for a weapon till he "found a new jawbone of an ass" (15:15). Yet more remarkable was Gideon's victory over the Midianites with trumpets and broken pitchers, with their satirical cry of faith "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon" (7:15-22). No explanation is furnished by the writer of Judges, nor does he link together those incidents. But when we turn to 1 Samuel 13:19-22, they are fully accounted for, for there we are told that when the Philistines subdued Israel they suffered "no smith throughout the land"! Those who are qualified to weigh evidence will perceive in such "undesigned coincidences the marks of truth—the more convincing since our attention is not directly called to them. "Goliath of Gath" (1 Sam. 17: 4). Let us mark the value of that casual mention of the giant's town—a detail of such little importance that its insertion or omission apparently mattered nothing. In Numbers 13:32, 33, we are informed that, "the sons of Anak were men of great stature." Later, that Joshua "cut off the Anakim from the mountains and utterly destroyed their cities," but a few remained "in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod" (Josh. 11:22). Thus 1 Samuel 17:4 is found to square with those independent statements in Numbers and Joshua—in the mouth of those three witnesses the veracity of history being established! In 1 Samuel 22:3, 4, David trusted his father and mother to the protection of the Moabites. Why he made such a strange and dangerous choice we are not told. Had not the book of Ruth come down to us, the mystery had been left unexplained, but there we learn that the grandmother of David's father was "a Moabitess" (Ruth 4:17), and thus the propriety of his selection of their place of refuge appears—yet only by comparing the two books together is the

circumstance accounted for. The undesignedness of many passages in the Gospels is overlooked in our familiar acquaintance with them. For instance, why were the sick brought to Jesus "when the even was come" (Matthew 8:16)? From the parallel passages, (Mark 1:21; Luke 4:31) we learn that the transaction took place on the Sabbath—which ended at sunset (Lev. 23:32). Then from Matthew 12:10—an entirely independent passage—we discover there was a superstition among the Jews that, "it was not lawful to heal on the Sabbath day." No explanation is given in Matthew 8:16, and had it not been for the accounts of Mark and Luke we had not known it was "the Sabbath"! How came it to pass that Peter, a stranger, who had entered the house in the night, and under circumstances of some disorder, was identified by the maid in the porch (Matthew 26:71)? John 18:16, tells us: he had stood there with John until "her that kept the door" admitted them—one Gospel minutely confirming the other. The Bible, my reader, consists of no cunningly devised fables, but authentic records of momentous events. They court examination and will sustain the most diligent scrutiny, evidencing themselves to be eminently trustworthy and faithful accounts of actual happenings. While they relay much that is extraordinary, miracles many and mighty, yet confidence in the historicity is established by the numerous marks of reality, consistency, and accuracy which the ordinary matters of fact combined with them constantly exhibit. The exact agreement between incidental statements in widely separated parts of the Bible argues the truthfulness of each of them. The closer we check one narrative with another the more does the veracity of the writers appear. Thus, when I find Paul affirming that from "a child" Timothy had "known the Scripture" (2 Tim. 3:1 5)—which necessarily implies at least one Jewish parent—and then discover his mother was "a Jewess" (Acts 16:1), I am compelled by the very obliquity of such a statement to accept it as inerrant. 14. Its dispassionate poise. In all the historical narratives of Old and New Testaments alike there is a most noticeable absence of any expression of feeling on the part of those who penned them. One and all maintain candor and calmness when chronicling the most pathetic or the most atrocious incidents. There is no trace anywhere of their own delight or anger—not a single outburst of that personal bitterness and rancor which so often mar the writings of uninspired men. Instead, we behold a mild equanimity and quiet dignity breathing throughout the sacred pages. Thus, when the fall of our first parents, with all its disastrous consequences, is recorded, it is with out any reflections of the scribe annexed thereto. The murder of Abel is related, but no recriminations are cast upon Cain. Even when informing us there was "no room in the inn" for Joseph and Mary, and that the newly born Saviour was perforce laid in a manger, the evangelist indulges in no cutting invectives upon those who so grievously insulted the Son of God. When another evangelist records the ferocious and wicked attempt of Herod upon the life of the infant Saviour by ordering all the children in Bethlehem under the age of two to be slain, he voices no horrified denunciation at such brutality; and when he relates how the legal parents of Christ had to flee into Egypt in order to escape from the murderous designs of that king, he pronounces no railing accusation upon him, such as an ordinary writer had deemed fit. Another of them tells us of the tetrarch of Galilee vilely yielding to the demand of a dancing girl that the head of John the Baptist be brought to her on a platter, but refrains from all aspersion upon the woman's baseness and the weakness and wickedness of his consenting to the murder of our Lord's forerunner—and with unparalleled honesty states that, "the king was exceeding sorry" (Mark 6:26). It was not that the evangelists were devoid of feeling, but that they were so completely under the control of the One who moved them to write that their natural passions were wholly subdued. Still more remarkable is the entire absence of any reproaches from the evangelists upon the glaring injustice of the judges of the Redeemer, the horrid indignities to which He was subjected during His last hours, and the blasphemous taunts hurled at Him as He hung upon the tree. Their temperate and unvarnished description of Christ's trial and crucifixion is without parallel. Instead of indignantly upbraiding Caiaphas and Pilate, instead of hot strictures upon the hypocritical priests and Pharisees, instead of strong declamations of the brutal

soldiers—there is nothing but the calm discharge of their task as sacred historians. How entirely different from the temper and tone of the ordinary biographer when recounting the injuries of those he loves or highly esteems! So, too, in the accounts of our Lord's resurrection—what an opportunity did that unique event afford the evangelists to break forth in accents of admiration! What an occasion was it for extolling the powers of their triumphant Redeemer! Instead, there is only a brief account of the bare facts of the case. Surely it is patent that such moderation and sobriety can only be accounted for on the ground that the Holy Spirit fully controlled them, that as the amanuenses of God they wrote not by natural impulse, but by Divine inspiration!

15. Its amazing anticipations. A few words need to be said upon the scientific reliability of the Bible. First, there is not a word which clashes with any known fact discovered since it was written. Therein it differs radically from the Shafter of the Hindus (which affirms the moon to be 50,000 leagues higher than the sun!), the Koran of Mahomet (which teaches the mountains were created "to prevent the earth from moving!"), the statement of Pope Zanchary (which denied the antipodes), or the blunders which the latest generation of scientists find in the writings of their immediate predecessors. Second, the Bible makes known "secrets of Nature" of which all contemporary writings were totally ignorant. Space permits of but few illustrations to show that the Bible has always been far in advance of "science." There is not a little recorded in Holy Writ of which the ancients knew nothing, but which was verified long afterwards. For example: "Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, Pleiades, and the chambers of the south" (Job 9:9): centuries after that was said the southern hemisphere was unknown! "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7): sustaining it in space without any material support, kept in position by the center of gravity. As Dr. Leathers (King's College London) pointed out, "Job, more than 3,000 years ago, described in the language of scientific accuracy the condition of our globe." "Or ever the silver cord [the spinal column] be loosed, or the golden bowl [the skull] be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel be broken in the cistern" (Eccl. 12:6). The lungs take in and pour out air as a pitcher does water. The heart is "the wheel" on which the pitcher is brought up from the cistern: one of its lobes receives blood from the veins, the other lobe casts it out again, pulsing it through the arteries. Therein the circulation of the blood was figuratively described long before Hervey discovered it! Any good encyclopedia will inform its readers that in the 17th century AD., Sir Isaac Newton discovered the "law" of the circular motion of the wind; yet long before, Solomon had declared, "The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again to his circuits" (Eccl. 1:6). It will likewise attribute to Newton the discovery of "the law of evaporation," yet the Bible had previously made known, "He causeth vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth" (Ps. 135:7). One would think from man's writings that the scientists had invented these things! But many centuries before coal was first mined, Job declared, "As for the earth out of it cometh bread, and under it is turned up as it were fire" (28:5): combustible material which provides the most suitable fuel for the furnace. Millenniums before Henry Ford was born, Nahum. (2:4) foretold, "The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings"! In Genesis 15:5, God said to Abraham, "Look now toward Heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them," while in Jeremiah 33:22, we read, "the host of Heaven cannot be numbered." When those verses were penned, none on earth had the least idea there was a countless number of stars. Ptolemy made a catalogue of the whole sphere of the heavens and made them to be but three thousand and fifty! But when Galileo turned his telescope on the heavens, he discovered there were many more than had been seen by the naked eye; when Lord Roosse used his great reflector, he found they were to be numbered by the millions; and when Herschel examined the "milky way," he learned it was composed of countless myriads! How came it that Moses and Jeremiah used expressions so far in advance of the knowledge of their day, unless guided by Omniscience? "Thus shall it

be in the day when the Son of Man shall be revealed: in that day. . . he that is in the field . . . in that night there shall be two in bed, the one shall be taken and the other left" (Luke 17:30-35). How strikingly accurate: day on one side of the earth, night on the other!—a fact quite unknown in Luke's time! 16. Its ineffable purity. This appears relatively, by comparing the Bible with other writings, for it far excels all human codes of law in its injunctions, prohibitions, and motives as the light of a sunny day does that of a foggy one. It is equally evident when considered absolutely in itself as no other book, the turpitude and horrid nature of sin as "that abominable thing" which God hates (Jer. 44:4), and which we are to detest and shun. It never gives the least indulgence or dispensation to sin, nor do any of its teachings lead to licentiousness. It sternly condemns sin in all its forms, and makes known the awful curse and wrath of God which are its due. It not only reproves sin in the outward lives of men, but discovers the secret faults of the heart, which is its chief seat. It warns against its first motions, and legislates for the regulating of our spirits, requiring us to keep clean the fountain from which are the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). Its promises are made unto holiness, and its blessings bestowed upon the pure in heart. The ineffable and exalted holiness of the Bible is its chief and peculiar excellence, as it is also the principal reason why it is disliked by the majority of the unregenerate. The Bible forbids all impure desires and unjust thoughts, as well as deeds. It prohibits envy (Prov. 23:17), and all forms of selfishness (Rom. 15:1). It requires us to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, to perfect holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 7:1), and bids us "abstain from all appearance of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22)—injunctions which are quite foreign to the "moralists" of the ancients! Heavenly doctrine is to be matched with heavenly character and conduct. Its requirements penetrate into the innermost recesses of the soul, exposing and censuring all the corruptions found there. The law of man goes no farther than "thou shalt not steal," but that of God, "thou shalt not covet." The law of man prohibits the act of adultery, that of God reprehends the looking upon a woman to lust after her (Matt. 5:28). The law of man says, "thou shalt not murder," that of God forbids all ill-will, malice or hatred (1 John 3:15). It strikes directly at that which fallen nature most cherishes and craves: "Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you" (Luke 6:26)— a denunciation of no human invention! It prohibits the spirit of revenge, enjoins the forgiveness of injuries, and, contrary to the self-righteousness of our hearts, inculcates humility. Though we have now set forth no fewer than thirty separate lines of evidence for the Divine Authorship of the Scriptures, we are far from having exhausted the subject. We might have shown that the Divine inspiration of the Bible is attested by its miraculous preservation through the centuries, its unrivalled influence upon humanity, its perennial freshness, its inexhaustible fullness, its marvelous unity, its verification in Christian experience—but we have previously written thereon. Separate sections could have been devoted to the setting forth of its minute accuracy, its pride-abasing contents, its inculcation of altruism, its power to search the conscience, its intense realism— dealing not with theorizing and idealizing, but the actualities of life, its utter unworldliness, its sanctifying tendency, its teaching on Providence—but we hesitate lest the reader be wearied, and because young preachers should now be able to work them out for themselves.

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