

The Fundamentals

A Testimony to the Truth

"To the Law and to the Testimony"
Isaiah 8:20

Volume VII

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CHAPTER IV

THE TESTIMONY OF THE ORGANIC UNITY OF THE BIBLE TO ITS INSPIRATION

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The argument for the inspiration of the Bible which I am to present is that drawn from its unity. This unity may be seen in several conspicuous particulars, upon some of which it will be well to dilate.

1. THE UNITY IS STRUCTURAL. In the Book itself appears a certain archetypal, architectural plan. The two Testaments are built on the same general scheme. Each is in three parts: historic, didactic, prophetic; looking to the past, the present, and the future.

Here is a collection of books; in their style and character there is great variety and diversity; some are historical, others poetical; some contain laws, others lyrics; some are prophetic, some symbolic; in the Old Testament we have historical, poetical, and prophetic divisions; and in the New Testament we have historic narratives, then twenty-one epistles, then a symbolic apocalyptic poem in oriental imagery. And yet this is no artificial arrangement of fragments. We find "the Old Testament patent in the New; the New latent in the Old."

In such a Book, then, it is not likely that there would be unity; for all the conditions were unfavorable to a harmonious moral testimony and teaching. Here are some sixty or more separate documents, written by some forty different persons, scattered over wide intervals of space and time, strangers to each other; these documents are written in three different languages, in different lands, among different and sometimes hostile peoples, with marked diversities of literary style, and by men of all grades of culture and mental capacity, from

Moses to Malachi; and when we look into these productions; there is even in them great unlikeness, both in matter and manner of statement; and yet they all constitute one volume.

All are entirely at agreement. There is diversity in unity, and unity in diversity. It is "*e pluribus unum.*" The more we study it, the more do its unity and harmony appear. Even the Law and the Gospel are not in conflict. They stand, like the cherubim, facing different ways, but their faces are toward each other. And the four Gospels, like the cherubic creatures in Ezekiel's vision, facing in four different directions, move in one. All the criticism of more than three thousand years has failed to point out one important or irreconcilable contradiction in the testimony and teachings of those who are farthest separated—there is no collision, yet there could be no collusion!

How can this be accounted for? There is no answer which can be given unless you admit the supernatural element. If God actually superintended the production of this Book, then its unity is the unity of a Divine plan and its harmony the harmony of a Supreme Intelligence.

As the baton rises and falls in the hand of the conductor of some grand orchestra, from violin and bass-viol, cornet and flute, trombone and trumpet, flageolet and clarinet, bugle and French horn, cymbals and drum, there comes one grand harmony! There is no doubt, though the conductor were screened from view, that one master mind controls all the instrumental performers. But God makes His oratorio to play for more than a thousand years; the key is never lost and never changes except by those exquisite modulations that show the master composer; and when the last strain dies away it is seen that all these glorious movements and melodies have been variations on one grand theme! Did each musician compose as he played, or was there one composer back of all the players?—"one supreme and regulating mind" in this Oratorio of the Ages? If God was the master musician planning the

whole and arranging the parts, then we can understand how Moses' grand anthem of creation glided into Isaiah's oratorio of the Messiah; by and by sinks into Jeremiah's plaintive wail, swells into Ezekiel's awful chorus, changes into Daniel's rapturous lyric; and, after the quartette of the evangelists, closes with John's full choir of saints and angels!

The temple, first built upon Mount Moriah, was built of stone, made ready before it was brought thither; there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house while it was in building. What insured symmetry in the temple when constructed, and harmony between the workmen in the quarries and the shops, and the builders on the hill? *One presiding mind planned the whole*; one intelligence built that whole structure in ideal before it was in fact. The builders built more wisely than they knew, putting together the ideas of the architect and not their own. Only so can we account for the structural unity of the Word of God. The structure was planned and wrought out in the mind of a Divine Architect, who superintended His own workmen and work. Moses laid its foundations, not knowing who should build after him, or what form the structure should assume. Workman after workman followed; he might see that there was agreement with what went before, but he could not foresee that what should come after would be only the sublime carrying out of the grand plan. During all those sixteen centuries through which the building rose toward completion, there was no sound of ax or hammer, no chipping or hacking to make one part fit its fellow. Everything is in agreement with everything else, because the whole Bible was built in the thought of God before one book was laid in order. The building rose steadily from corner-stone to cap-stone, foundations first, then story after story, pillars on pedestals, and capitals on pillars, and arches on capitals, till, like a dome flashing back the splendors of the noonday, the Apocalypse spans and crowns and completes the whole, glorious with celestial visions.

2. **THE UNITY IS HISTORIC.** The whole Bible is the history of the kingdom of God. Israel represents that kingdom. And two things are noticeable. All centers about the Hebrew nationality. With their origin and progress the main historical portion begins; and with their apostasy and captivity-it stops. The times of the Gentiles filled the interval and have no proper history; prophecy, which is history anticipated, takes up the broken thread, and gives us the outline of the future when Israel shall again take its place among the nations.

3. **THE UNITY IS DISPENSATIONAL.** There are certain uniform dispensational features which distinguish every new period. Each dispensation is marked by seven features, in the following order: (a) Increased light; (b) Decline of spiritual life; (c) Union between disciples and the world; (d) A gigantic civilization worldly in type; (e) Parallel development of good and evil; (f) Apostasy on the part of God's people; (g) Concluding judgment. We are now in the seventh dispensation, and the same seven marks have been upon all alike, showing one controlling power—*Deus in Historia*.

4. **THE UNITY IS PROPHETIC.** Of all prophecy, there is but one center, The kingdom and the King. 1. Adam, the first king, lost his scepter by sin. His probation ended in failure and disaster. 2. The second Adam, in His probation, gained the victory, routed the tempter, and stood firm. The two comings of this King constituted the two focal centers of the prophetic ellipse. His first coming was to make possible an empire in man and over man. His second coming will be to set that empire up in glory. All prophecy moves about these two advents. It touches Israel only as related to the kingdom; and the Gentiles only as related to Israel. Hence, in the Old Testament, Nineveh, Babylon, and Egypt loom up as the main foes to the kingdom, as represented by the Hebrews; and in the New Testament, the Beast, Prophet, and Dragon are conspicuous as the gigantic adversaries of that kingdom after Israel again takes her place.

There are some six hundred and sixty-six general prophecies in the Old Testament, three hundred and thirty-three of which refer particularly to the coming Messiah, and meet only in Him.

5. THE UNITY IS THEREFORE ALSO PERSONAL:

*"In the volume of the Book
It is written of Me."*

There is but one Book, and within it but one Person. Christ is the center of the Old Testament prophecy, as He is of New Testament history. From Genesis 3 to Malachi 3, He fills out the historic and prophetic profile. Not only do the three hundred and thirty-three predictions unite in Him, but even the rites and ceremonies find in Him their only interpreter. Nay, historic characters prefigure Him, and historic events are the pictorial illustrations of His vicarious ministry. The Old Testament is a lock of which Christ is the key. The prophetic plant becomes a burning bush, as twig after twig of prediction flames with fulfillment. The crimson thread runs through the whole Bible. Beginning at any point you may preach Jesus. The profile—at first a drawing, without color, a mere outline—is filled in by successive artists; until the life tints glow on the canvas of the centuries, and the perfect portrait of the Messiah is revealed.

6. THE UNITY IS SYMBOLIC. I mean that there is a corresponding use of symbols, whether in form, color, or numbers. In form, we have the square, the cube, and the circle, throughout, and used as types of the same truths. In color, we have the white for purity, the lustrous white for glory, the red for guilt of sin and the sacrifice for sin, the blue for truth and fidelity to promise, the purple for royalty, the pale or livid hue for death, and the black for woe and disaster. In numbers there is plainly a numerical system. One seems to represent unity, two correspondence and confirmation or contradiction, three is the number of Godhead, four of the world and man. Seven, which is the sum of three and four, stands for

the combination of the Divine and human; twelve, the product of three and four, for the Divine interpenetrating the human; ten, the sum of one, two, three, and four, is the number of completeness; three and a half, the broken number, represents tribulation; six, which stops short of seven, is unrest; eight, which is beyond the number of rest, is the number of victory. All this implies one presiding mind, and it could not be man's mind.

7. THE UNITY IS DIDACTIC. In the entire range and scope of the ethical teaching of the Bible there is no inconsistency or adulteration. But we need to observe a distinction maintained throughout as to natural religion and spiritual religion. There is a natural religion. Had man remained loyal to God, the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man would have been the two great facts and laws of humanity; the broad, adequate basis of the natural claim of God to filial obedience, and of man to fraternal love. But man sinned. He fell from the filial relationship; he disowned God as his Father. Hence, the need of a new and spiritual relationship and religion. In Christ, God's fatherhood is restored and man's brotherhood re-established, but these are treated as universal only to the circle of believers. A new obedience is now enforced, resting its claim, not on creation and providence, but on new creation and grace. Man learns a supernatural love and life.

Upon this didactic unity we stop to expatiate.

In not one respect are these doctrinal and ethical teachings in conflict, from beginning to end; we find in them a positive oneness of doctrine which amazes us. Even where at first glance there appears to be conflict, as between Paul and James, we find, on closer examination, that instead of standing face to face, beating each other, they stand back to back, beating off common foes.

We observe, moreover, a progressive development of revelation. Bernhard devoted the powers of his master mind to

tracing the "Progress of Doctrine in the New Testament." He shows that although the books of the New Testament are not even arranged in the order of their production, that order could not, in one instance, be changed without impairing or destroying the symmetry of the whole book; and that there is a regular progress in the unfolding of doctrine from the Gospel according to Matthew to the Revelation of St. John.

A wider examination will show the very same progress of doctrine in the whole Bible. Most wonderful of all, this moral and didactic unity could not be fully understood till the Book was completed. The progress of preparation, like a scaffolding about a building, obscured its beauty; but when John placed the cap-stone in position and declared that nothing further should be added, the scaffolding fell and a grand cathedral was revealed.

8. THE UNITY IS SCIENTIFIC. The Bible is not a scientific book, but it follows one consistent law. Like an engine on its own track, it thunders across the track of science, but is never diverted from its own.

(1). No direct teaching or anticipation of scientific truth is here found. (2). No scientific fact is ever misstated, though common, popular phraseology may be employed. (3). An elastic set of terms is used, which contain, in germ, all scientific truth as the acorn enfolds the oak.

These statements deserve a little amplification, as this has been supposed to be the weak side of the Bible. Yet, after a study of the Word on the one hand and natural science on the other, I believe we may safely challenge any living man to bring one well-established fact of science against which the Bible really and irreconcilably militates!

God led inspired men to use such language, as that without revealing scientific facts in advance, it accurately accommodates itself to them when discovered.

The language is so elastic and flexible as to contract itself to the narrowness of ignorance, and yet expand itself to the

dimensions of knowledge. If the Bible may, from imperfect human language, select terms which may hold hidden truths till ages to come shall disclose the inner meaning, that would seem to be the best solution of this difficult problem. And now, when we come to compare the language of the Bible with modern science, we find just this to be the fact.

For example, we are told that the Bible term "firmament" is but an ancient blunder crystallized. Modern science says, "Ye have heard it hath been said by them of old time, there is a solid sphere above us which revolves with its starry lamps; but this is an old notion of ignorance, for there is nothing but vast space filled with ether above us, and stars have an apparent motion because the earth turns on its axis."

But this word "firmament," which has been declared "irreconcilable with modern astronomy," we find, on consulting our Hebrew lexicon, means simply an "expanse." If Moses had been Mitchell, he could not have chosen a better word to express the appearance, and yet accommodate the reality. He actually anticipated science. This is one of the "mistakes of Moses" to which the modern blasphemer does not refer!

The general correspondence between the Mosaic account of creation and the most advanced discoveries of science, proves that only He who built the world, built the Book.

As to the order of creation, Moses and geology agree. Both teach that at first there was an abyss, or watery waste, whose dense vapors shut out light. Both make life to precede light; and the life to develop beneath the abyss. Both make the atmosphere to form an expanse by lifting watery vapors into cloud, and so separating the fountains of waters above from the fountains below. Both tell us that continents next lifted themselves from beneath the great deep, and brought forth grass, herb, and tree. Both teach that the heavens became cleared of cloud, and the sun and moon and stars, which then appeared, began to serve to divide day from night, and

to become signs for seasons and years. Both then represent the waters bringing forth moving and creeping creatures, and fowl flying in the expanse, followed next by the race of quadruped mammals, and, last of all, by man himself.

There is the same agreement as to the order of animal creation. Geology and comparative anatomy combine to teach that the order was from lower to higher types. First, the fish, in which the proportion of brain to spinal cord is as 2 to 1; then reptiles, in which it is as $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 1; birds, 3 to 1; mammals, 4 to 1; man, 33 to 1. Now, this is exactly the order of Moses. Who told him what modern science has discovered, that fish and reptiles belong below birds? As Mr. Tullidge says: "With the advance of discovery, the opposition supposed to exist between Revelation and Geology has disappeared; and of the eighty theories which the French Institute counted in 1806 as hostile to the Bible, not one now stands."

Take an example of this scientific accuracy from astronomy. Says Jeremiah in 30:22, "The host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured." Hipparchus about a century and a half before Christ, gave the number of stars as 1,022, and Ptolemy, in the beginning of the second century of the Christian era, could find but 1,026. We may, on a clear night, with the unaided eye, see only 1,160 or in the whole celestial sphere, about 3,000. But when the telescope began to be pointed to the heavens, less than three centuries ago, by Galileo, then men began to know that the stars are as countless as the sand on the seashore. When Lord Rosse turned his great mirror to the sky, lo! the number of visible stars increased to nearly 400,000,000! John Herschel resolves the nebulae into suns, and finds in the cloudy scarf about Orion, "a gorgeous bed of stars," and the Milky Way itself proves to be simply a grand procession of stars absolutely without number. And so, the exclamation of the prophet, 600 years before Christ, 2,200 years before Galileo, "the host of heaven cannot be numbered," proves to be not

a wild, poetic exaggeration, but literal truth. Who was Jeremiah's teacher in astronomy?

Let us take an example from natural philosophy. Moses accords with modern discoveries as to the nature of light, in not representing this mystery as being made, but "called forth," commanded to shine. If light be only "a mode of motion," how appropriate such phraseology!

In Job 37: 13, 14, we read of the dayspring that it takes hold of the ends of the earth; it is turned as clay to the seal, and they stand as a garment. The ancient cylindrical seals rolled over the clay, and left an impress of artistic beauty. What was without form before, stood out in bold relief, like sculpture. So, as the earth revolves, and brings each portion of its surface successively under the sun's light and heat, what was before dull, dark, dead, discloses and develops beauty, and the clay stands like a garment, curiously wrought in bold relief and brilliant colors. Considered either as science or poetry, where, in any other book of antiquity, can you find anything equal to that? That phrase, "takes hold of the ends of the earth," conveys the idea of a bending of the rays of light, like the fingers of the hand when they lay hold. When the sunlight would touch the extremities of the earth, it is bent by the atmosphere so as to secure contact, and, but for this, vast portions, out of the direct line of the sun's rays, would be dark, cold and dead. Who taught Job, 1,500 years or more before Christ, to use terms that Longfellow or Tennyson might covet to describe refraction?

"When the morning stars sang together," Job 38:7, has been always taken to be a high flight of poetry. And when in the Psalms, 65:8, we read, "Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice," the Hebrew word means to give forth a tremulous sound, or to make vibrations—to sing. In these poetic expressions, what scientific truth was wrapped up! Light comes to the eye in undulations or vibrations, as tones of sound to the ear. There is a point at which these

vibrations are too rapid or delicate to be detected by our sense of hearing; then a more delicate organ, the eye, must take note of them; they appeal to the optic nerve instead of the auditory nerve, and as light and not sound. Thus, light really sings. "The lowest audible tone is made by 16.5 vibrations of air per second; the highest, by 38,000; between these extremes lie eleven octaves. Vibrations do not cease at 38,000 but our organs are not fitted to hear beyond those limitations." And so it is literally true that "the morning stars sang together." Here is Divine phraseology that has been standing there for ages uninterrupted. And now we may read it just as it stands: "Thou makest the outgoings [or light radiations] of the morning and evening to sing," i. e., to give forth sound by vibration.

"Solomon, in Eccles. 12:6, has left us a poetic description of death. How that "silver cord" describes the spinal marrow; the "golden bowl", the basin which holds the brain; the "pitcher", the lungs; and the "wheel", the heart!

The circulation of the blood was discovered twenty-six hundred years afterward by Harvey. Is it not very remarkable that the language Solomon uses exactly suits the fact—a wheel pumping up through one pipe to discharge through another?

9. Last of all, **THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE IS ORGANIC.** And this means it is the unity of organized being. *Organic unity implies three things: first, that all parts are necessary to a complete whole; secondly, that all are necessary to complement each other; and thirdly, that all are pervaded by one life-principle.*

Let us apply these laws to the Word of God.

(1). *All the parts of the Bible are necessary to its completeness.* Organic unity is dependent on the existence and cooperation of organs. An oratorio is not an organic unit. Any part of it may be separated from the rest, or displaced by a new composition.

But if this body of mine loses an eye, a limb, or the smallest joint of the finger, it is forever maimed; its completeness is gone.

Not one of the books of the Bible could be lost without maiming the body of truth here contained. Every book fills a place. None can be omitted.

For example, the Book of Esther has long been criticised as not necessary to the completeness of the Canon, and particularly, because "it does not even once contain the name of God." But that book is the most complete exhibition of the providence of God. It teaches a Divine Hand behind human affairs; unbiased freedom of resolution and action as consistent with God's overruling sovereignty; and all things working together to produce grand results. The book that thus exhibits God's providence does not contain the name of God; perhaps because this book is meant to teach us of the Hidden Hand that, unseen, moves and controls all things.

"Ruth" seems to be only a love-story to some; but how rich this book is in foreshadowings of Gospel truth, especially illustrating the double nature of the God-man, our Redeemer.

Boaz is a type of Christ—Lord of the Harvest, Dispenser of Bread, Giver of Rest, He is Goël—the Redeemer. Boaz, the near kinsman, buying back the lost inheritance and marrying Ruth, suggests Jesus, the God-man, our near Kinsman, yet of a higher family, the Redeemer of our lost estate, and Bridegroom of the redeemed Church.

The Epistle to Philemon seems at first only a letter to a friend about a runaway slave. But this letter is full of illustrations of grace. The sinner has run away from God, and robbed Him besides. The law allows him no right of asylum; but grace concedes him the privilege of appeal. Christ, God's Partner, intercedes. He sends him back to the Father, no more a slave but a son.

(2). *The second law of organic unity is that all parts are necessary to complement each other.*

Cuvier has framed in scientific statement this law of unity. Organized being in every case forms a whole—a complete system—all parts of which mutually correspond; none of these parts can change without the other also changing; and consequently each taken separately indicates and gives all the others. For instance, the sharp-pointed tooth of the lion requires a strong jaw; these demand a skull fitted for the attachment of powerful muscles, both for moving the jaw and raising the head; a broad, well developed shoulder-blade must accompany such a head; and there must be an arrangement of bones of the leg which admits of the leg-paw being rotated and turned upward, in order to be used as an instrument to seize and tear the prey; and of course there must be strong claws arming the paw. Hence from one tooth, the animal could be modeled though the species had perished.

Thus the Four Gospels are necessary to each other and to the whole Bible. Each presents the subject from a different point of view, and the combination gives us a Divine Person reflected, projected before us, like an object with proportions and dimensions.

Matthew wrote for the Jew, and shows Jesus as the King of the Jews, the Royal Lawgiver. Mark wrote for the Roman, and shows Him as the Power of God, the Mighty Worker. Luke wrote for the Greek, and shows Him as the Wisdom of God, the human Teacher and Friend. John, writing to supplement and complement the other Gospels, shows Him as Son of God, as well as Son of man, having and giving eternal life.

These are not Gospels of Matthew, etc., but one Gospel of Christ, according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The first three present the person and work of Christ from the outward, earthly side; the last, from the inward and heavenly. In the beginning of each Gospel we find emphasized: in Matthew, Christ's genealogy, in Mark His majesty, in Luke His humanity, in John His divinity. So, in the close of each:

in Matthew His resurrection, in Mark His ascension, in Luke His parting benediction and promise of enduement, and in John the added hint of His second coming.

The Epistles are likewise all necessary to complete the whole and complement each other. There are five writers, each having his own sphere of truth. Paul's great theme is Faith, and its relations to justification, sanctification, service, joy and glory. James treats of Works, their relation to faith, as its justification before man. He is the counterpart and complement of Paul. Peter deals with Hope, as the inspiration of God's pilgrim people. John's theme is Love, and its relation to the light and life of God as manifested in the believer. In his Gospel, he exhibits eternal life in Christ; in his epistles, eternal life as seen in the believer. Jude sounds the trumpet of warning against apostasy, which implies the wreck of faith, the delusion of false hope, love grown cold, and the utter decay of good works. What one of all these writers could we drop from the New Testament?

The Unity of the Bible is the unity of one organic whole. The decalogue demands the Sermon on the Mount. Isaiah's prophecy makes necessary the narrative of the Evangelists. Daniel fits into the Revelation as bone fits socket. Leviticus explains, and is explained by, the Epistle to the Hebrews. The Psalms express the highest morality and spirituality of the Old Testament; they link the Mosaic code with the Divine ethics of the Gospels and the Epistles. The passover foreshadows the Lord's supper, and the Lord's supper interprets and fulfills the passover. Even the little book of Jonah makes more complete the sublime Gospel according to John; and Ruth and Esther prophetically hint the Acts of the Apostles. Nay, when you come to the last chapters of Revelation, you find yourself mysteriously touching the first chapters of Genesis; and lo! as you survey the whole track of your thought, you find you have been following the perimeter of a golden ring; the extremities actually bend around, touch,

and blend. You read in the first of Genesis of the first creation; in the last of the Revelation, of the new creation—the new heaven and the new earth; there, of the river that watered the garden; here, of the pure river of the water of life; there, of the Tree of Life in the first Eden; here, of the Tree of Life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God; there, of the God who came down to walk with and talk with man; here, we read that the Tabernacle of God is with men; there, we read of the curse that came by sin, here, we read: “And there shall be no more curse.”

(3). *The third and last law of organic unity is, that one life principle must pervade the whole.* The Life of God is in His Word. That Word is “quick”—living. Is it a mirror? yes, but such a mirror as the living eye; is it a seed? yes, but a seed hiding the vitality of God; is it a sword? yes, but a sword that omnisciently discerns and omnipotently pierces the human heart. Hold it reverently; for you have a living Book in your hand. Speak to it, and it will answer you. Bend down and listen; you shall hear in it the heart-throbs of God.

This Book, thus *one*, we are to hold forth as the Word of Life and the Light of God, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. We shall meet opposition. Like the birds that beat themselves into insensibility against the light in the Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor, the creatures of darkness will assault this Word, and vainly seek to put out its eternal light. But they shall only fall stunned and defeated at its base, while it still rises from its rock pedestal, immovable and serene!