

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION Chapter 1

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD AS MANIFEST IN CREATION

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Transcript

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Chapter 1

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The Bible opens with the words, "In the beginning God." He was in the beginning because Himself without beginning: the uncaused, self-existent and self-sufficient One—"from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God" (Ps. 90:2). But the youthful, yet intelligent inquirer, will ask, And do you comprehend that? We candidly answer, Certainly not, for how could one who is finite comprehend the Infinite, a creature of time fully understand the Eternal One? Nevertheless, we believe it, being logically and rationally obliged to do so. There must of necessity be a First Cause, and if a first Cause, that Cause is obviously uncaused and self-existent. If that First Cause be the Originator of all other causes and effects, then it follows that Cause is not only self-existent but self-sufficient, or, in other words, all-mighty. Since we may ascertain something—often much—of the nature of a cause from the effects it produces, then from the effects perceptible to us in the visible universe, it is clearly evident that the First Cause must be endowed with life, with intelligence, with will, in a word, with Personality, and one infinitely superior to ours—which First Cause we recognize and own as God. Though the opening words of the Bible take the existence of God for granted, yet what immediately follows supplies more than a hint where we may find irrefutable evidence that He is: "In the beginning God created the Heaven and the earth." It has been truly said, "We need no other argument to prove that God made the world than the world itself—it carrieth in it and upon it the infallible tokens of its original" (John Owen). That is true if we consider it simply in the mass: how came it to be? Three theories have been put forward to account for the existence of matter by those who believe not in its creation. First, that matter is eternal. But that solves no difficulty, in fact it involves one much more perplexing than any which Genesis 1:1 can give rise to. In itself matter is both inert and unintelligent: whence then its motion and marks of design? Second, by spontaneous generation. But not only is there no proof to support such a view, it is too self-evidently inadequate to merit discussion. Third, by evolution: concerning which we will now only point out—push that hypothesis backward, stage by stage, till you come to the first molecule or protoplasm, and to the question, How did it originate? No answer is forthcoming. Something could not evolve from nothing! Though the universe could not evolve from

nothing, it could be created by an eternal and all-mighty Creator! Assuming the existence of God, our difficulty is at once resolved. But with the universe spread before our eyes we do not have to assume God's existence. "Because the things which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse" (Rom. 1:19, 20). God may be rationally inferred by reasoning back from effect to cause. Intelligent arrangement, wise contrivement, marks of design argue an intelligent Designer. There are such palpable and innumerable impressions of Divine wisdom, power and goodness in the works of God that unprejudiced reason must necessarily conclude a Creator of whose perfections those impressions are the faint adumbrations. So true is this that atheists and all idolaters are left without any excuse. Thus it is apparent that the doubts of Infidels are either affected or arise from the determination to rid themselves of the idea of accountableness. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God." (Ps. 14:1): it is moral depravity and not mental weakness which prompts such a desire. "The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). The universe proclaims God both by its very existence and its wondrous composition. From whence proceeded this vast system, with its exquisite order, its perfect balance, and its enduring strength? Every effect must have an adequate cause. If the heavens do not declare the existence of God and scintillate with the reflections of His glory, let the Infidel tell us what they do bespeak. If the celestial bodies be nothing more than a fortuitous mass of atoms, flung together by unreasoning law or blind chance, then what has preserved them throughout the ages? What regulates their movements with more than clock-like precision? What invested the sun with light and actinic power? To put it on the lowest level—can skepticism furnish any answer to those questions which satisfies reason or appears adequate to common sense? If the thoughtful beholder of the stellar heavens perceives no evidence of a Divine Creator, then are we not obliged to sorrowfully exclaim, "None so blind as those who will not see"! It is true that a recognition of the Creator in His creation is no evidence of regeneration, for many who never open the Bible are convinced of the reality of His existence, yet such mental perception is much to be preferred to the stupidity of atheism or the darkness of agnosticism. We pointed out that the origin of three essential things in Nature call for explanation from the attentive observer: matter, motion and life. Having considered the alternative solutions for the first, let us now contemplate the others. Concerning them we cannot do better than present to the reader a summary of what we deem a singularly able and convincing discussion by John Armour in his unique work (out of print), *Atonement and Law*. As we contemplate the wondrous movement of bodies in the solar system, measuring time for us with absolute exactness, and as we rise to the conception of the harmonious motion of all bodies in space, measuring duration for all created beings, we cannot but be actuated with an intense desire to know the cause of this wondrous motion. But the question, what is the cause of the motion of the heavenly bodies in space? naturally resolves itself into the more general question: what is the cause of all motion? The ready, the only answer is force. But this raises the real question: what is the origin of force? Every investigation of that subject leads to the profound conviction that all force is traceable to life. In the entire vegetable kingdom we have perpetual demonstration of the intimate and necessary relations of motion, force and life. Even the least instructed, who have no conception of the real activity or of the observable motion in all growing plants, cannot but know that the mighty forests are built up by vital force operating tirelessly century after century. Even they cannot but know that the whole world is covered over with the countless, varied and marvellous products and proofs of the mysterious, universally recognized, but invisible vital power. Only those who have patiently and perseveringly gazed into that limitless world into which the microscope is the only door, and have witnessed the amazing activity of vital force in plant life, can have any idea of the manner in which the entire vegetable kingdom

testifies of the intimate relations of motion, force and life. Let anyone spend but a few hours in watching the rapid and incessant motion in a small leaf (such as that of the *Anacharis Alsinastrum*) under one of the best microscopes art has been able to furnish, the field being less than ten thousandths part of an inch—in that small field can be distinctly seen twelve rows of cells with an average of five cells in each row. The current can be seen flowing rapidly along appropriate channels, like rivers with broken ice on the surface, while in each of the sixty oblong cells the fluids are seen circulating like eddies or whirlpools in a rushing stream. But for the perfection which microscopic art has attained, this amazing activity would never have been suspected or credited. Witnessing this activity in the ten-thousandth part of an inch on the surface of a small leaf, what would be the impression upon the mind could we look upon a single tree, discerning the activity of vital force in every part of it with the same degree of clearness? While we cannot do this, imagination can transfer what we have seen in the leaf under the microscope to all the leaves of the forest, to all vegetation on the globe, for in every cell of every living plant there is substantially the same vital activity. Whether we look upon forest or field, the eye of the mind should discern not merely motionless forms of life, but everywhere intensely active vital power. Were we capable of seeing the real activity of the vital force in the living tree, it would be to us scarcely less wonderful than the "great sight" which Moses turned aside to see; nor could it fail to produce in us a sense of the Divine presence not unlike that which he experienced. This vital action, which man and all created intelligences must ever strive to behold, and may ever more and more clearly discover, God Himself alone sees as it is. The same line of remark might be followed out at length in regard to force and motion in every department of the animal kingdom. Here also the life is the force, and force that never ceases to produce activity. In the ova vitalized, and from that instant, on and on through all vicissitudes, motion is demonstrably uninterrupted till death, or rather the cessation of motion is death. The only absolute test of life is vital action. When this has ceased it is proof that vital force has ceased—that vitality is extinct. Nor is there the slightest ground to believe that this vital action, having ceased for an instant, can start again of itself. Vital activity can no more begin in plant or animal organism in which it has once ceased than in matter in which it never existed. The animal kingdom, then, is a witness, and in all its extent, with myriad voices in perfect unison, it declares, "All motion is from vital force." The testimony of these two kingdoms is both positive and negative. Their witness agrees: "In us all motion is from vital force." "With us all motion ceases when vital force ceases." When we come, however, to man, and consider the motion traceable to him, we have to deal with a very different problem, and unless we give special attention we shall probably leave out of the estimate the vastly greater part of the evidence in this case. For man, unlike all other living beings on earth, or at least infinitely beyond other beings on earth, has the power to produce motion, not merely by force of muscle without skill, but he has the power to originate and sustain motion on a grand scale by means of the vital force of brain as well. The savage who should cast a stone a little way into the sea by strength of arm, or from a sling, or shoot an arrow from his bow, or propel his little boat a few miles from the shore in a calm sea, would give proof of the extent of his power. Clearly, in each case, from that of the stone which could be hurled but a few yards to that of the vessel which might be propelled perhaps as many miles, the motion would be wholly attributable to vital force of muscle and brain, or to skill and strength. The civilized man who constructs and launches the ocean steamer that plows its furrow through the sea, in calm and storm, for thousands of miles gives proof of his power to produce motion by skill and strength. The ocean steamer that circumnavigates the globe, displacing the water and defying the storm, is, as one might truthfully say, hurled around the world; and its motion, in that entire revolution, is as clearly traceable to vital force of hand and brain in the civilized man, as is that of the stone from the hand, or the arrow from the bow, of the savage. Let an honest inquirer light upon the ocean steamer at any stage of its long journey. Let him search the vessel from keel to top-mast. Finding no life in hull or rigging, no life in coal or fire, no life in

water or steam, no life in engine or propeller, shall he say, "This vessel does not owe its force and motion to life at all." If he so determine, he is not a philosopher but a fool. For every part of the vessel, from keel to top-mast, is eloquent in its testimony to the vital force of combined skill and strength of man in its construction. And this we may recognize with all the confidence with which, on approaching an eight-day clock in the middle of the week, we recognize its onward movement as the vital force of the constructor of the clock, combined with the vital force of the person who wound it up—for not only is the vital force of the hand that wound the clock as truly the cause of its continued motion as though that hand had never for an instant been withdrawn, but the vital force of the contriver and the actual constructor, though he may have passed away centuries ago, is as clearly prolonged as would be the vital force of the hand that wound the clock, though the very next hour it were cold and motionless in death. I have ventured to dwell longer on this illustration because of the argument it furnishes in favour of the recognition of vital force as the cause of other and infinitely grander movements. We come now to a stage in our investigations in which, unless we exercise the utmost vigilance, we shall utterly fail to interpret the transcendent scene where there is an aggregate of motion in comparison with which all we have hitherto considered is but as the small dust of the balance. As to rapidity, the swiftest we have as yet contemplated is as that of the snail; as to vastness of orbit, even that of the ocean steamer around the globe is but as the "finger ring of a little girl"—as we contemplate motion on a scale so grand, motion of bodies so vast and so numerous, motion in orbits a scarcely perceptible arc of which has been traversed since man appeared on earth, motion which highest created intelligences must regard with never-ending wonder and admiration—shall we begin to detach, in our conception, motion from force, or force from that which lives? If we do, how can we any longer pretend that we are consistent, scientific or philosophical? All motion hitherto considered has been traceable to that which lives. Why at this stage begin to question whether that which moves is moved by force or whether force proceeds from life? Motion on a small scale we have found is from vital force. All the motion that man has ever been able to trace to its source he has found to proceed from life. There is not a shred of trustworthy evidence that any visible thing on earth has the power to originate motion. And the invisible power that causes all the motion we can at all trace to its source is always vital power. We have traced force and motion from that in the smallest seed in plant life and that of the ova in animal life, and have found force and motion ever proceed from that which lives. Why, then, when we stand in the presence of the most wondrous motion—motion that speaks of force beyond all conception—do we, all at once, lapse from the conviction that motion must proceed from force and that force must proceed from life? Doubt comes in where evidence is most abundant. A stone seen moving through the air we believe was hurled by some lad, though we see him not. A cannon ball crossing the bay we do not doubt was sent by persons having skill and power. An ocean steamer driven around the world we know owes its force and motion to skill and power of living beings. When we see mighty orbs moving in space, why do we raise any question regarding the origin of motion and force? The only shadow of reason that can be imagined is that we cannot readily conceive of a Being infinite, ever-present, and all-mighty, the Source of all motion, all force producing all motion in the universe. In a vastly higher sense than that in which the motion of the steamship in mid-ocean is to be attributed to man, all motion in the universe, including that produced in and by vital organisms in this world and in all worlds, is to be attributed to the Infinite, the Ever-living, the Almighty. In the presence of the moving universe may we not exclaim: "Power belongs unto God"? Why should we hesitate to accept the conclusions thus reached? The data furnished to all men leave them without excuse. The soundness of the reasoning by which I have undertaken to prove that motion, mere motion, as recognized everywhere in the universe, since it assures us of the universality of law, is to us direct proof of the existence of the Ever-living, Ever-present Lawgiver is confidently submitted to the judgment of candid and competent reasoners. The great timepiece of the universe in its surpassing

grandeur and glory may continue to move with absolute exactness and utmost harmony from age to age and century to century. The multitudes of mankind may continue to look upon it mainly to see what time of day it is, as indicated upon the broad dial-plate that meets their gaze, and never reflect that this grand time-measurer, like every poor imitation of it man has ever constructed, measures time by means of motion, and motion sustained by force, this force in its turn necessarily from the living, traceable to the living. Yet there may be those who shall find time, even in this busy age, to look with prolonged and steadfast gaze, with awakened and quickened powers, and with intense interest upon the ever-present and never-exhausted wonders of that aggregate of motion before which all effort towards estimate is perfectly powerless. And when favorably situated therefor, the truly evidential nature of God's glorious work may flash out even as the noonday itself, so that, before this one surpassing demonstration of the power and presence of God, all doubts shall be driven away. Even as night itself is chased around our globe by the glorious king of day; so that thenceforward, even to life's close, they shall live in the noonday splendor of unquestioning faith—faith, not vision, for God gives everywhere and in all things not merely proof that He is, but that He is and must be forever more the Invisible. But though invisible, God is neither the Incredible nor the Unknowable, for He has set before all men "the invisible things of Him" and these "are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." Among the visible things of Him which are clearly seen, that is, clearly and fully recognized by all men—motion, force and life—have place; for by these are made known the universality of law, the presence, power and glory of the Ever-living, Ever-present Lawgiver. Not only does the existence of matter, of motion, and of life, testify that God is, but the magnitude and magnificence of creation announce the same grand truth: the work reveals the Workman. "The massive dome of St. Peter's, rising 400 feet, and ablaze with the masterpieces of Italian art, declares an architect and artist—someone who planned, built, decorated it. This is a thought in stone and tells of a thinker. It did not grow of itself, or come to be by some mysterious "evolution" or "development." Atoms never could arrange themselves in such harmonious relations, or fall accidentally into such marvelous combination. Blind chance never built that cathedral in Rome. There must have been a controlling intelligence—an intelligent control. Yet some would have us believe that the vaster Dome of Heaven with its millions of starry lamps, surmounting a grander Temple of Creation, had neither Architect to plan nor Builder to construct! The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews indulged in no mere poetic rhapsody when he wrote, "Every house is builded by someone: but He who built all things is God." "The thoughtful observer must feel that in the heavens there is not only a testimony to a Creator, but a partial revelation of His character and attributes. Such a work and workmanship not only reveal a Workman, but hint what sort of workman He is. For example, as no bounds have ever been found in the universe, it is natural to infer an infinite Creator. The vast periods discovered by astronomy suggest His eternity. The forces of the universe, displaying stupendous power, bespeak His omnipotence. Waste, everywhere going on and needing perpetual resupply, demands omnipresence. The exact proportion and wise adaptation of every part to each other, and of all to the great whole, tell of omniscience, which includes both infinite knowledge and wisdom. The Being who survives and guides all the changes of this universe must Himself be immutable; and He who lavishes upon His work such wealth of splendour and variety of beauty must be both infinitely rich in resources and versatile in invention. So also the universal harmony by which the whole mechanism is regulated, indicates a character of infinite perfection in harmony with itself. Thus, seen from no higher point of view than the scientific and philosophical, the dome of the sky bears, wrought on its expanse, in starry mosaics, 'There is a God'" (The Gordian Knot). Descending from the heavens to the planet on which we reside, here, too, we are confronted with phenomena, both in the general and the particular, both in nature and number, for which no explanation is adequate save that of an all-mighty, benevolent,

and infinitely wise Creator. Upon the surface of this earth are incalculable hosts of creatures, varying in size from gnats to elephants, each requiring its regular food, the total amount of which for a single day defies human computation if not the imagination. Those creatures are not set down in a dwelling-place where the table is bare, but where there is abundance for them all; nor are they furnished merely with a few necessities, but, instead, with a great variety of luxuries and dainties. From whence proceed such ample and unfailling supplies? From Nature, says the materialist. And what or whom endowed Nature to bear so prolifically and ceaselessly? To which no intelligent reply is forthcoming. Only one answer satisfactorily meets the case: from the living God! "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle and herb for the service of men: the earth is full of Thy riches. These all wait upon Thee, that Thou mayest give them meat in season. Thou openest Thy hand, they are filled with good" (Ps. 104:14). The continuous fertility of the earth after 6,000 years of incessant productiveness can only be satisfactorily explained by attributing the same unto the riches and bounty of its Maker. That one generation of creatures is succeeded by another, in endless procession, on its surface, to find such an illimitable store of food available for them, is nothing but a stupendous miracle, the marvel of which is lost upon us either through our thoughtlessness or because of its unfailling and regular repetition. The constant supplies which God causes the earth to yield for such myriads of beings is just as remarkable as the original production of the place in which they were to live, for the annual re-fertilization of the earth is actually a continuous creation. To quote again from Psalm 104: as the reverent beholder contemplates the revived countenance of Nature in the springtime, he cannot but turn his eyes unto the living God and exclaim, "Thou renewest the face of the earth" (v. 30). Beholding as he does the barren fields, the leafless trees, the frozen ground, and often the sunless skies, during the dreary months of winter, and seeing everything covered in white, it appears that the earth has grown old and died, that a pall of snow has fallen to hide its forbidding features. And what could man do, what could all the scientists in the world do, if winter should be prolonged month after month, and year after year? Nothing, but slowly yet surely die of starvation. But the Creator has declared, "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest shall not cease" (Gen. 8:22), and therefore He makes good that promise each year, by causing winter to give place to spring and "renewing the face of the earth." The world is as full of creatures today as though none had ever died, for as soon as one generation passes from it, it is at once replaced by another, coming to a larder already well filled for it. And again we insist, that was made possible and actual only by God's having "renewed the face of the earth." And what a marvelous thing that is, yea, a series of marvels. That such a variety of food, so perfectly adapted to the greatly varying digestive organs of insects, animals and men, so replete with nourishment, so attractive in appearance, should be produced by soil, than which nothing is more insipid, sordid, and despicable. What a pleasing variety of fruits the trees bear: how beautifully colored, elegantly shaped and admirably flavored! Shall we be struck most with agreeable astonishment at the Cause of such effects or at the manner of bringing them into existence? "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork" (Ps. 19:1). The stellar heavens proclaim the attributes of their Maker, bespeaking not only His existence but His excellence—while the atmospheric heavens exhibit His unique skill, revealing to us both their Author and His wondrous wisdom. Upon the former many have discussed, but the latter has received very much less notice. The "firmament" signifies "the expanse" and, as distinct from the sphere of the more distant planets, refers to the atmosphere surrounding the earth—the air in which the clouds are seen. The Hebrew verb rendered "showeth" means to "place before" for our thoughtful inspection, as challenging our most serious and reverent contemplation. Though the atmosphere be not an object of our sight, and for that reason is little regarded, it is a most remarkable contrivance or apparatus, a source of many advantages to us, and one which richly repays those who carefully consider it and take pleasure in "seeking out" the works of the Lord (Ps. 111:2). The atmospheric pressure upon a

person of ordinary stature is equal to the weight of 14 tons, and it scarcely needs to be pointed out that the falling upon him of a very much lighter object would break every bone in his body and drive all breath out of his lungs. Why then is it that we suffer no inconvenience from it, nay, thrive therein and enjoy it? Here is a phenomenon which, if thus viewed, is not unlike that which so awed Moses of old when he beheld the miracle of the burning bush—the combustible substance all aflame and yet not consumed. And by what means are we preserved from that which, considered abstractly, is such a deadly menace? The Creator's having so devised that the air permeates the whole of our body, and by its peculiar nature pressing equally in all directions, all harm and discomfort is prevented—"the heads of the thigh and arm bones are kept in their sockets by atmospheric pressure" (International Encyclopedia). The air, commissioned by its benign Author, performs many offices for the good of mankind. While it covers us without any conscious weight, the air reflects, and thereby increases the life-giving heat of the sun. The air does this for us much as our garments supply additional heat to our bodies. If the reader has, like the writer, climbed a mountain and reached a point 13,000 feet above sea level, then he has proved for himself how considerably the solar warmth is diminished as the quality of the air becomes more attenuated. At its base the climb was comfortably warm, but had we remained a night on its summit, death by freezing would have been the outcome. What reason have we, then, to bless the Disposer of all things for placing us at a level where we suffer no ill or inconvenience from the atmosphere, for the combined wisdom of men could no more moderate it than regulate the actions of the ocean! The air co-operates with our lungs, thereby ventilating the blood and refining the fluids of the body, stimulating the animal secretions, and regulating our natural warmth. We could live for months without the light of the sun or the glimmering of a star, but if deprived of air for a very few minutes we quickly faint and die. Not to us alone does this "universal nurse" (as Hervey eloquently styled her) minister: it is this gaseous element enveloping the earth which both sustains and feeds all vegetable life. Again—the air conveys to our nostrils those minute particles (effluvia) which are emitted by odiferous bodies, so that we are both refreshed by the sweet fragrance of flowers and warned by offensive smells to withdraw from a dangerous situation or beware of injurious food. So, by the undulating motions of the air, all the diversities of sound are conducted to the ear, for if you were placed in a room from which all air had been withdrawn and a full orchestra (wearing artificial respirators) played at fortissimo, not a sound would you hear. Not only does the air waft to our senses all the charming modulations of music and the elevating influences of refined and edifying conversation, but it also acts as a seasonable and faithful monitor. For example, should I be walking along the road, my eyes looking off unto some object, or my mind so absorbed that I am completely off my guard, and a vehicle be bearing down upon me from behind, though my eyes perceive not my danger, yet my ear takes alarm and informs me of my peril, even while it be some distance away, and with kindly if clamorous importunity bids me act for my safety. Let us then inquire, what is it that has endowed the atmosphere with such varied and beneficent adaptations, so that it diffuses vitality and health, retains and modifies solar heat, transmits odours and conveys sound? Must we not rather ask "Whom?" and answer, "This also cometh from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" (Isa. 28:29). "Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still and consider the wondrous works of God. Dost thou know when God disposed them [i.e., the winds and clouds, the thunder and lightning, the frost and rain], and caused the light of His cloud to shine? Dost thou know the balancing of the clouds, the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:14-16). The same queries are addressed unto each of us, and call for calm and quiet reflection. "Stand still and consider the wondrous works of God" which appear in the firmament. That is, cease for an hour from your feverish activities and devote yourself, as a rational creature, unto serious reflection, and compose yourself for thoughtful contemplation. "Consider" what is brought forth in, by, and from the atmosphere, and then be filled with reverent wonder and awe. Ponder well the fact that water is

much denser and far heavier than air, and yet it rises into it, makes a way through it, and takes up a position in its uppermost regions! One would just as soon expect the rivers to run backward to their source; yet Divine wisdom has contrived a way to render it not only practicable but a matter of continual occurrence. There in the firmament we behold an endless succession of clouds fed by evaporation from the ocean, drawn thither by the action of the sun. The clouds are themselves a miniature ocean, suspended in the air with a skill which as far transcends that of the wisest man as his knowledge does that of an infant in arms. It is because so very few "stand still and consider" the amazing fact of millions of tons of water being suspended over their heads and sustained there in the thinnest parts of the atmosphere, that such a prodigy is lost upon them. The writer recalls the impressions made upon him over 30 years ago as he was driven around the Roosevelt Dam in Arizona and inspected that great engineering feat: probably some of our readers have experienced similar ones as they have beheld some huge reservoir of human contrivance. But what are they in comparison with the immeasurably vaster quantities of water which, without any conduits of stone or barriers of cement, are suspended in the clouds, and kept there in a buoyant state! The clouds, as another pointed out, "travel in detached parties, and in the quality of itinerant cisterns round all the terrestrial globe. They fructify by proper communications of moisture the spacious pastures of the wealthy and gladden with no less liberal showers the cottager's little garden. Nay, so condescending is the benignity of the great Proprietor that they satisfy the desolate and waste ground, and cause, even in the most uncultivated wilds, the bud of the tender herb to spring forth, so that the natives of the lonely desert, those savage herds which know no master's stall, may nevertheless experience the care and rejoice in the bounty of an all-supporting Parent" (James Hervey). But what most fills us with wonderment is that these celestial reservoirs, so incalculably greater than any of human construction, should be suspended in the air. This it was which so evoked the admiration of both Job and Eliphaz: "He [said the former] bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them" (Job 26:8) notwithstanding their prodigious weight. One of the things attributed to God in Holy Writ is that He has fixed "the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet they cannot prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it" (Jer. 5:22). If it be not its Maker whose mandate had determined the bounds of the sea, who has fixed its limits? Certainly not man, for he who cannot control himself is scarcely competent to issue effective orders to the ocean. That was made fully evident in the days of Noah, when for the first and last time God gave the waters their full freedom, and dire was the consequence, for the whole human race was helpless before them. Without that Divine decree the impetuous sea would again overflow the earth, for such is its natural propensity. But by the mere fiat of His lips God immutably controls this turbulent element. On some coasts high cliffs of rock serve as impregnable ramparts against the raging main, but in others—to evince God is confined to no expedients, but orders all things according to the counsel of His own will—He bids a frail bank of earth curb the fury of its angry waves. But wonderful as it is that, by the Divine ordinance, a narrow belt of contemptible sand should confine the sea to its appointed limits, yet to us it seems even more remarkable that such immense volumes of water are held in the air within the compass of the clouds. Writing thereon, one of the ablest of the Puritans pointed out: "There are three things very wonderful in that detention of the waters. First, that the waters, which are a fluid body and love to be continually flowing and diffusing themselves, should yet be stopped and stayed together by a cloud, which is a thinner and so a more fluid body than the water. It is no great matter to see water kept in conduits of stone or in vessels of brass, because these are firm and solid bodies, such as the water cannot penetrate nor force its way through; but in the judgment of Nature, how improbable is it that a thin cloud should bear such a weight and power of waters, and yet not rend nor break under them! This is one of the miracles in Nature, which is therefore not wondered at because it is so common, and which because it is constant is not inquired

into. "Second, as it is a wonder that the cloud is not rent under the weight of water, so that the cloud is rent at the special order and command of God. At His word it is that the clouds are locked up, and by His word they are opened. As in spiritual things so in natural: 'He openeth, and no man shutteth; He shutteth, and no man openeth.' Third, this also is wonderful that when at the word of God the cloud rents, yet the waters do not gush out like a violent flood all at once, which would quickly drown the earth, but descend in moderate showers, as water through a colander, drop by drop. God carrieth the clouds up and down the world, as the gardener does his watering-can, and bids them distil upon this or that place as Himself directeth. The clouds are compared to 'bottles' in Job 38:37, and those God stops or unstops, usually as our need requires, and sometimes as our sin deserves. 'I have withholden the rain from you' (Amos 4:7), and He can withhold it till the heavens above us shall be as brass and the earth under us as iron. 'I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it' (Isa. 5:6)" (Joseph Caryl, 1643). There were still other features of the handiwork of God in the firmament which Job was enjoined to stand still and consider, namely, that God "caused the light of His cloud to shine," and "the balancing of the clouds," which are denominated "the wondrous works of Him which is perfect in knowledge" (37:15, 16). Upon the expanse of ether overhead we behold scenes infinitely more exquisite than any which a Turner or a Raphael could produce: sights so delicately colored, so subtle in texture, so vast in extent, they could do no justice unto in their attempts to reproduce. What artist's brush can begin to portray the splendors of the eastern sky as the monarch of the day emerges from his rest, or the entrancing magnificence of the western horizon as he retires to slumber? The Hebrew verb for "shine" in Job 37:15, means to shine in an illustrious manner, as in Deuteronomy 33:2 (and cf. Ps. 50:1), and "the light of the cloud" refers to the light of the sun's reflection from or upon a watery cloud, producing that wonderful phenomenon the rainbow, which is so conspicuous and beautiful, so desirable and attractive, so mysterious and marvelous. "Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?" (Job 37:16). Can you explain how such prodigious volumes of water are suspended over your head and held there in the thinnest parts of the atmosphere? Can you tell what it is which causes those ponderous lakes to hang so evenly and hover like the lightest down? What poises those thick and heavy vapours in coverings so much lighter and thinner than themselves, and prevents their rushing down more impetuously than a mountain torrent? Must we not again employ the personal pronoun, and answer, "HE bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds, and the cloud is not rent under them" (26:8). Who puts the clouds, as it were, into scales, and so orders their weight that one does not overpower another, but rather hang evenly? This is another of the wondrous works of God, who makes the clouds smaller or larger, higher or lower, according to the service He has appointed and the use He makes of them: nothing but the Divine wisdom and power can satisfactorily account for such a prodigy. Yes, "He bindeth up the waters in His thick cloud." Those masses of water do not remain stationary in the firmament by themselves, nor could they, for, being so much heavier than the air, they would naturally fall of their own weight and power at once in disorder and ruin to the land beneath. It is God who makes them behave and perform His bidding. By some secret power of His own, God fetters them so that they cannot move until He permits. And though these waters be of such mighty bulk and weight, they do not rend the fleecy filament which contain them. "The thick cloud is not rent under them": the same Hebrew word is rendered "divided" in Psalm 78:13 where the reference is to the Almighty cleaving a way for His people through the Red Sea. There is a natural tendency and power in those waters to rend the clouds, but until God bids them, they are held in place, delicately poised, mysteriously but perfectly balanced. "Which doeth great things and unsearchable, marvelous things without number. Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields" (Job 5:9, 10). Observe the tense of the verb in the first sentence: it is not only that God "has done" or that He "will do" great things, though both be true, but that He now "doeth" as a present and continued act, for us to take notice of today. Among those stupendous and inscrutable

wonders is His sending of the rain, which, though an almost daily provision, is something which men can neither manufacture nor regulate. We do not have far to go in order to inquire or actually see these "marvelous things": they are near to hand, of frequent occurrence, and, if closely looked into, every shower of rain discovers the wisdom, power and goodness of God. Nature works not without the God of nature, and its common blessings are not dispensed without a special providence. The course of nature only moves as it is turned by the hand of its Maker and directed by His counsels. The heaviest clouds distil no water until they receive commission from God to dissolve. "For He maketh small the drops of water: they pour down rain according to the vapor thereof, which the clouds do drop and distil upon man abundantly" (Job 36:27, 28). "Rain is the moisture of the earth drawn up by the heat of the sun into the middle region of the air, which being there condensed into clouds, is afterward, at the will of God, dissolved and dropped down again in showers" (Joseph Caryl). Though an ordinary and common work of God, yet it is a very admirable one. The Psalmist tells us God "prepareth rain for the earth" (147:8). He does so by the method just described, and then by "making small" its drops, for unless He did the latter, it would pour down in a flood. That, too, is a work of His power and mercy, for the earth could not absorb solid volumes of water at once. "Also can any understand the spreadings of the clouds?" (Job 36:29). Fully so? No, as the diverse and inadequate theorizings of men go to show. It is almost amusing to examine the various answers returned by philosophers and scientists to the question. What holds the clouds in position? The heat of the sun, say some. But if that were the case rain would fall during the night only, whereas the fact is that as many clouds break and empty themselves in the daytime as during the hours of darkness. By the winds, which keep them in perpetual motion, say others. But how can that be, for sometimes the clouds unburden themselves when a hurricane is blowing, and at others in a dead calm. By their sponginess, which permits their being permeated by the air, thus holding them in place, say others. Then why do light and heavy clouds alike move and evaporate? We are logically forced to rise higher, to the will and power of God. It is also of His mercy that the clouds serve as a cool canopy over our heads and break the fierce heat and glare of the sun. Let us pause here and make practical application of what has been before us. These wonders of nature, so little considered by the majority of our fellows, should speak loudly to our hearts. They should awe us, humble us, bow us in wonderment before the Author of such works. But it is more especially the children of God we now have in mind, and particularly those who are in straits and trouble, whose way is hedged up, whose outlook appears dark and foreboding. As we have contemplated such marvels of Divine wisdom and power, should not our faith be strengthened, so that we look upward with renewed confidence unto our heavenly Father? Must we not, in view of such prodigies, join with the Prophet in exclaiming, "There is nothing too hard for Thee" (Jer. 32:17)? Cannot He who has commissioned the very atmosphere to perform so many useful and benevolent offices for our good, relieve our temporal distress? Cannot He who sustains such mighty volumes of water over our head, also support and succour us? Cannot He who paints the glorious sunrise shine into our soul and dissipate its gloom? Consider the rainbow, not only as a mystery and marvel of nature, but also as a sacramental sign, as a token of God's covenant faithfulness. That is the use we should make of "the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in knowledge." That is how we should "consider" them, and the conclusion we should draw from them. There is no limit to the power of that One who, in the beginning, made Heaven and earth, and who throughout the centuries has preserved them. When we are confronted with difficulties which seem insurmountable, we should look above, around, below—and beholding the marvelous handiwork of God commit ourselves and our case into His hands with full assurance. When Hezekiah was confronted with the formidable hosts of Sennacherib he sought refuge in the Divine omnipotence, spreading that king's haughty letter before the Lord and appealing to Him as, "Thou hast made Heaven and earth" (2 Kings 19:15), and therefore can vanquish for us our enemies. So, too, the

Apostles, when forbidden by the authorities to preach the Gospel, appealed to God as the One who "made Heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is" (Acts 4:24). Rest, then, in this blessed and stimulating truth, that "nothing is too hard" for Him who has loved you with an everlasting love! "The sea is His and He made it" (Ps. 95:5). The ocean and its inhabitants present to our consideration as many, as varied, and as unmistakable, evidences of the handiwork of God as do the stellar and atmospheric heavens. If we give serious thought to the subject, it must fill us with astonishment that it is possible for any creatures to live in such a suffocating element as the sea, and that in waters so salty they should be preserved in their freshness; and still more so that they should find themselves provided with abundant food and be able to propagate their species from one generation to another. If we were immersed in that element for a few minutes only, we should inevitably perish. Were it not for our actual observation and experience, and had we but read or heard that the briny deep was peopled with innumerable denizens, we should have deemed it an invention of the imagination, as something utterly impracticable and impossible. Yet by the wisdom and power of God not only are myriads of fishes sustained there, but the greatest of all living creatures—the whale—is found there. In number countless, in bulk matchless, yet having their being and health in an element in which we could not breathe! As it is with us in the surrounding air, so it is with the fish in their liquid element: the principle of the equal transmission of pressure enables their frail structures to bear a much greater pressure and weight than their own without being crushed—the air and the fluids within them pressing outward with a force as great as the surrounding water presses inward! Moreover, "They are clothed and accoutered in exact conformity to their clime. Not in swelling wool or buoyant feathers, nor in flowing robe or full-trimmed suit, but with as much compactness and with as little superfluity as possible. They are clad, or rather sheathed, in scales, which adhere closely to their bodies, and are always laid in a kind of natural oil—which apparel nothing can be more light, and at the same time so solid, and nothing so smooth. It hinders the fluid from penetrating their flesh, it prevents the cold from coagulating their blood, and enables them to make their way through the waters with the greatest possible facility. If in their rapid progress they strike against any hard substance, this their scaly doublet breaks the force of it and secures them from harm" (James Hervey). Being slender and tapering, the shape of fishes fits them to cleave the waters and to move with the utmost ease through so resisting a medium. Their tails, as is well known, are extremely flexible, consisting largely of powerful muscles, and act with uncommon agility. By its alternate impulsion, the tail produces a progressive motion, and by repeated strokes propels the whole body forward. Still more remarkable is that wonderful apparatus or contrivance, the air-bladder, with which they are furnished, for it enables them to increase or diminish their specific gravity, to sink like lead or float like a cork, to rise to whatever height or sink to whatever depths they please. As these creatures probably have no occasion for the sense of hearing, for the impressions of sound have very little if any existence in their sphere of life, to have provided them with ears would have been an encumbrance rather than a benefit. Is that noticeable and benignant distinction to be ascribed to blind chance? Is it merely an accident that fishes, that need them not, are devoid of ears which are found in all the animals and birds? The cold logic of reason forbids such a conclusion. A spiritually minded naturalist has pointed out that almost all flat fish, such as soles and flounders, are white on their underside but tintured with darkish brown on the upper, so that to their enemies they resemble the color of mud and are therefore more easily concealed. What is still more remarkable, Providence, which has given to other fishes an eye on either side of the head, has placed both eyes on the same side in their species, which is exactly suited unto the peculiarity of their condition. Swimming as they do but little, and always with their white side downward, an eye on the lower part of their bodies would be of little benefit, whereas on the higher they have need of the quickest sight for their preservation. Admirable arrangement is that! Where nothing is to be feared, the usual guard is withdrawn; where danger threatens their guard is not only placed, but

doubled! Now we confidently submit that such remarkable adaptations as all of these argue design, and that, in turn, a designer, and a Designer, too, who is endowed with more than human wisdom, power and benignity. "One circumstance relating to the natives of the deep is very peculiar, and no less astonishing. As they neither sow nor reap, have neither the produce of the hedges nor the gleanings of the field, they are obliged to plunder and devour one another for necessary subsistence. They are a kind of licensed bandit that make violence and murder their professed trade. By this means prodigious devastation ensues, and without proper, without very extraordinary recruits, the whole race would continually dwindle and at length become totally extinct. Were they to bring forth, like the most prolific of our terrestrial animals, a dozen only or a score, at each birth, the increase would be unspeakably too small for consumption. The weaker species would be destroyed by the stronger, and in time the stronger must perish, even by their successful endeavors to maintain themselves. Therefore to supply millions of assassins with their prey and millions of tables with their food, yet not to depopulate the watery realms, the issue produced by every breeder is almost incredible. They spawn not by scores or hundreds, but by thousands and tens of thousands. A single mother is pregnant with a nation. By which amazing but most needful expedient, a periodical reparation is made proportional to the immense havoc" (James Hervey). "Speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee" (Job 12:8). Mute though the fishes be, yet they are full of instruction for the thoughtful inquirer. Study them intelligently and your mind shall be improved and your knowledge increased. And what is it that the dumb fishes declare unto us? Surely this: that there is a living God, who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" (Isa. 28:29); that the creature is entirely dependent on the Creator, who fails not to supply all its needs; that ready obedience to the Divine will becomes the creature, and is rendered by all save rebellious man. In exemplification of that last fact, let us call attention to that amazing phenomenon of countless multitudes of finny visitors crowding upon our shores at the appointed season of the year, and in an orderly succession of one species after another. What is equally remarkable, though less known, is the fact that as they approach, the larger and fiercer ones—who would endanger the lives of the fishermen and drive away the ones which provide us with food—are restrained by an invisible Hand and impelled to retire into the depths of the ocean. As the wild beasts of the earth are directed by the same overruling Power to hide themselves in their dens, so the monsters of the deep are laid under a providential interdiction! If we survey with any degree of attention the innumerable objects which the inhabitants of this earth present to our view, we cannot but perceive unmistakable marks of design, clear evidences of means suited to accomplish specific ends, and these also necessarily presuppose a Being who had those ends in view and devised the fitness of those means. Order and harmony in the combined operation of many separate forces and elements point to a superintending Mind. Wise contrivances and logical arrangements involve forethought and planning. Suitable accommodations and the appropriate and accurate fitting of one joint to another unquestionably evinces intelligence. The mutual adjustment of one member to another, especially when their functions and properties are correlated, can no more be fortuitous than particles of matter could arrange themselves into the wheels of a watch. The particular suitability of each organ of the body for its appointed office comes not by accident. Benevolent provision and the unflinching operation of law, logically imply a provider and a lawgiver. The fitting together of parts and the adoption of means to the accomplishment of a definite purpose can only be accounted for by reference to a designing Will. Thus, the argument from design may be fairly extended so as to include the whole range of creation and the testimony it bears in all its parts to the existence of the Creator. Forcibly did Professor John Dick argue, "If we lighted upon a book containing a well-digested narrative of facts, or a train of accurate reasoning, we should never think of calling it a work of chance, but would immediately pronounce it to be the production of a cultivated mind. If we saw in a wilderness a building well

proportioned and commodiously arranged and furnished with taste, we should conclude without hesitation and without the slightest suspicion of mistake that human will and human labour had been employed in planning and erecting it. In cases of this kind, an atheist would reason precisely as other men do. Why then does he not draw the same inference from the proofs of design which are discovered in the works of creation? While the premises are the same, why is the conclusion different? Upon what pretext of reason does he deny that a work, in all the parts of which wisdom appears, is the production of an intelligent author? And attribute the universe to chance, to nature, to necessity, to anything, although it should be a word without meaning, rather than to God?" "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? and He that formed the eye, shall He not see?" (Ps. 94:9). The manifest ability of the ear to receive and register sounds, and of the eye for vision, argues an intelligent Designer of them. The Infidel will not allow that conclusion, but what alternative explanation does he offer? This—there may be adaptation without design, as there may be sequence without causation. Certain things, he tells us, are adapted to certain uses, but not made for certain uses: the eye is capable of vision, but had no designing author. When he is asked, How is this striking adaptation to be accounted for apart from design, he answers, Either by the operation of law, or by chance. But the former explanation is really the acknowledgment of a designer, or it is mere tautology, for that law itself must be accounted for, as much as the phenomena which come under it. The explanation of "chance" is refuted by the mathematical doctrine of probability. The chance of matter acting in a certain way is not one in a million, and in a combination of ways, not one in a trillion. According to that theory, natural adaptation would be more infrequent than a miracle, whereas the fact is that adaptation to an end is one of the most common features of nature, occurring in innumerable instances. When the Psalmist said, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:14), he gave expression to a sentiment which every thoughtful person must readily endorse. Whether that statement be taken in its widest latitude as contemplating man as a composite creature—considering him as a material, rational and moral being—or whether it be restricted to his physical frame, yet it will be heartily confirmed by all who are qualified to express an opinion thereon. Regarding it in its narrower scope, the composition and construction of the human body is a thing of amazing workmanship. To what extent David was acquainted with the science of anatomy we know not, but in view of the pyramids and the Egyptians' skill in embalming the body (and "Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians"— Acts 7:22—and doubtless passed on much of the same unto his descendants) and the repeated statement of Holy Writ that "there is nothing new under the sun," we certainly do not believe the ancients were nearly so ignorant as many of our inflated moderns wish to think. But be that as it may, the outward structure of the body, the ordering of its joints and muscles for the service of its tenant, the proportion of all its parts, the symmetry and beauty of the whole cannot but strike with wonderment the attentive student of the human frame. This living temple has aptly been termed "the masterpiece of creation." Its sinews and muscles, veins and blood, glands and bones, all so perfectly fitted for their several functions, are a production which for wisdom and design, the adaptation of means to ends, not only far surpasses the most skilful and complicated piece of machinery ever produced by human art, but altogether excels whatever the human imagination could conceive. That the nutritive power of the body should be working perpetually and without intermission replacing waste tissue; that there should be a constant flowing of the blood and beating of the pulses, that the lungs and arteries (comprised of such frail and delicate substances) should move without cessation for 70 or 90 years—for 900 years before the Flood!—presents a combined marvel which should fill us with astonishment and awe, for they are so many miracles of omniscience and omnipotence. But turning to the more obvious and commonplace, the human hand and eye, let us conclude this chapter with a rather longer quotation than usual from The Gordian Knot, for it calls attention to features which, though equally remarkable, the most untrained are able to appreciate. "The human hand was obviously meant to be the servant of the entire body. It is put at the

extremity of the arm, and the arm is about half the length of the body, and, as the body can bend almost double, the hand can reach any part of it. The hand is at the end of an arm having three joints, one at the shoulder, one at the elbow, one at the wrist, and each joint made on a different pattern so as to secure together every conceivable motion—up and down, sidewise, backward and forward, and rotary. The hand is made with four fingers and an opposing thumb, which secures a double leverage, without which no implement or instrument could be securely grasped, held, or wielded, and so strangely are the fingers molded of unequal lengths that they exactly touch tips over a spherical surface, such as a ball or the round handle of a tool. "There are two hands—opposite and apposite to each other in position and construction, so that they exactly fit each other and work together without interference, making possible by joint action what neither could accomplish alone. Montaigne, referring to one only of the hand's many capacities—a gesture—says: 'With the hand we demand, promise, call, dismiss, entreat, deny, encourage, accuse, acquit, defy, flatter, and indicate silence; and with a variety and multiplication that almost keeps pace with the tongue.' The hand is so strikingly capable of being used to express conceptions and execute designs that it has been called 'the intellectual member.' "The human eye is perfect in structure and equally perfect in adaptation. It is placed in the head like a window just under the dome, to enable us to see farthest; placed in front, because we habitually move forward; shielded in a socket of bone for protection to its delicate structure, yet protected from that socket by a soft cushion; provided with six sets of muscles to turn it in every direction; with lids and lashes to moisten, shut it in, protect it and soothe it; with tear ducts to conduct away excess of moisture; and having that exact shape—the only one of all that might have been given—to secure distinct vision by refracting all rays of light to a single surface, which is known in science as the ellipsoid of revolution. "By a wonderful arrangement of iris and pupil it at once adapts itself to near and far objects of vision and to mild or intense rays of light, and, most wonderful of all, the human eye is provided in some inscrutable manner with the means of expressing the mind itself, so that one may look into its crystal depths and see intellectuality, scorn, and wrath, and love, and almost every spiritual state and action' (Dr. E. F. Burr). "The eye of man has taught us the whole science of optics. It is a camera obscura, with a convex lens in front, an adjustable circular blind behind it; a lining of black to prevent double and confusing reflections; fluids, aqueous and vitreous, to distend it; a retina or expansion of the optic nerve to receive the images of external objects; with minute provision for motion in every direction; and, most wonderful of all, perhaps, perfect provision against the spherical and chromatic aberration which would produce images and impressions ill defined and false colored. Yet the microscope shows these lenses themselves to be made up of separate folds, in number countless, the folds themselves composed of fibers equally countless, and toothed so as to interlock. And with all this, perfect transparency is preserved! "It is in the minutiae of creation, perhaps, that the most surprising marvels, mysteries and miracles of creative workmanship are often found. It is here also that the works of God so singularly differ from the works of man. However elaborate man's work it does not bear minute microscopic investigation. For instance, the finest cambric needle becomes coarse, rough and blunt under the magnifying lens, whereas it is only when looked at with the highest power of the microscopic eye that Nature's handiwork really begins to reveal its exquisite and indescribable perfection. Where the perfection of man's work ends, the perfection of God's work only begins. "The proofs of this perfection in minutiae are lavishly abundant. When a piece of chalk is drawn over a blackboard, in the white mark on the board, or the powder that falls on the floor, are millions of tiny white shells, once the home of life. The dust from the moth's wing is made up of scales or feathers, each as perfect as the ostrich plume. The pores of the human skin are so closely crowded together that 75,000 of them might be covered by a grain of sand. The insect's organ of vision is a little world of wonders in itself. In the eye of a butterfly 34,000 lenses have been found, each perfect as a means of vision. The minute cells in which all life, vegetable and animal,

reside present as true an evidence of the mysterious perfection of individual workmanship and mutual adaptation as the constellations that adorn the sky, and equally with them declare the glory of God! How it speaks of a Creator who can lavish beauty even on the stones, and who carries the perfection of His work into the realm of the least as well as the greatest!"

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