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BIBLE NUMERICS

A BALANCED AND DEFENSIBLE ASSESSMENT

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Executive Summary

This paper seeks a balanced and defensible assessment of Bible-Numerics (BN), using the work of Dr. Ivan Panin (Panin; 1855–1942) as a basis for this condensed evaluation. BN suggests and, to a significant extent, confirms the presence of mathematical-patterns embedded within the original Hebrew and Greek texts of Scripture (Bible). Panin's research, in particular, argues that these patterns are so extensive, structured, and interwoven, they cannot reasonably be explained through human-authorship alone. While this particular subject-matter of BN remains outside mainstream academic consensus, it nonetheless continues to provide a compelling line of apologetic-support for the divine-inspiration of Scripture: especially when it's approached with appropriate care and a sound theological grounding. Our assessment concludes and affirms that BN should NOT be treated as foundation for the Christian-Faith, but as a powerful supporting-witness to strengthen confidence in the integrity, unity, and divine Origin of the Biblical-text.

INTRODUCTION

The divine-inspiration of Scripture has long been examined through multiple lenses: historical-accuracy, fulfilled-prophecy, moral-authority, spiritual-renewal, and personal-revival, among others. BN introduces an additional dimension to this: a mathematical-structure embedded within the Biblical-text itself. The central question is not whether the Bible inspires in a general (emotional-devotional) sense: this has been sufficiently answered in the countless lives transformed by the Power of Calvary's Cross, throughout the history of the Church. The deeper question, that presses itself upon the thinking mind, is whether the Bible is inspired in the fullest and highest sense: that the Holy Spirit of God stands behind every word of Scripture, as they were originally given. In this regard, Panin's research (amongst others) presents one of the most unusual and thought-provoking arguments: the Bible bears a divine numerical 'watermark' that's been woven into its very structure. It's the claim that the Bible has an arithmetic-structure so intricate, so ordered, and so interwoven, it resists the explanation that mere human-means alone was responsible. This line-of-evidence, less known and often misunderstood, is deeply compelling to those who encounter it.

WHAT IT IS & HOW IT WORKS

The 'what' and 'how' of BN lies in a simple but profound linguistic fact: in the Hebrew and Greek language, the letters of the alphabet also function as numbers. This creates multiple layers of analysis: letter-values, word-totals, structural-counts, and even divisibility-patterns. At the interpretive-level, the numerical significance of specific numbers in Scripture is well-established: for example, the number 'seven' is implied as divine 'completion' or 'perfection', the number 'twelve' for divine 'governance', the number 'forty' for 'testing', and so on. These examples are widely recognized and near universally accepted. BN extends this further, by asking if these 'patterns' are not only symbolic, but structural. So, to properly appreciate Panin's work, we must first understand this about Hebrew and Greek. In English, we use one set of symbols for letters and another set for numbers. But in the original biblical languages, letters were also used as numbers, meaning that every Hebrew and Greek letter carried an independent numerical value: therefore, a sentence has a value, a paragraph has a value, and a larger passage of Scripture can also be examined, not just for grammar and meaning, but for its' precise arithmetic-structure. Panin argued that with Scripture, these 'values' were not random decorations: they were, in fact, participating in a larger 'pattern.'

DR. PANIN: LIFE & TURNING POINT

Dr. Ivan Panin was not introduced to BN as a credulous man looking for reasons to believe. He was born in Russia in 1855, and was associated in his early years with radical and atheistic currents. He later studied in Europe, and eventually became a Harvard-trained scholar, living in the United States. Panin approached the Bible first as a critic and agnostic, not as an unquestioning defender of Christianity. Yet, in the course of studying the Greek New Testament, he began to notice numerical-patterns that subsequently led him into fifty years of painstaking work. He counted letters, words, forms, names, and arrangements. He compared manuscripts. He examined the original languages. He tried to see if he could find elsewhere, what he was finding in Scripture. But the deeper he went, the more convinced he became that the Bible, bore a divine mathematical 'watermark' that no mere human author, or even a committee of authors, could have engineered. What he found was an intricate numerical-structure running through the Hebrew-text of the Old Testament, and the Greek-text of the New Testament: this structure, that he discovered, is so extensive, so ordered, and so interwoven, it cannot be explained away as coincidence or literary cleverness. Compelled by the evidence he discovered about the Bible, and ultimately the glorious Message of the Gospel of Christ Jesus that it spoke of, Panin surrendered his life to Christ and he became an impassioned Believer in the Christian Faith.

WHAT PANIN DISCOVERED

Repeated numerical features were appearing at multiple levels all at once: not just the number of words, but also the number of letters. Not just the total, but the number of nouns, proper names, masculine names, feminine names, words beginning with vowels, words beginning with consonants, words that occur only once, words that occur more than once, and words appearing in more than one form. Panin claimed that these features repeatedly come out in exact multiples of significant numbers, such as the number 'seven.' In other words, the mathematical-pattern he discovered was not hanging from one nail: it was locked into the passage from many directions, at the same time. The number most commonly associated with Panin's work is 'seven': this is not surprising, because this number (as already stated) occupies a prominent place in Scripture, and within the created-order as well. But Panin's argument goes much further than simply saying the Bible mentions the number 'seven' a lot. His argument and claim, is that the structure of the Biblical-text itself shows 'sevens' in places, where no translator or casual reader could have ever arranged them.

A simple illustration is observed in the very first verse of the Bible, *Genesis 1:1*. In Hebrew, this verse contains seven words and twenty-eight letters, which is four times seven. The numerical-value of the three nouns, often translated "God," "heaven," and "earth", totals 777. Whatever one may think of this example on its own, Panin claimed it was only the beginning. The same pattern, he argued, appears in genealogies, narratives, and whole sections of doctrinal teaching: including the genealogy of Christ in the *Gospel of Matthew*, the account of the Virgin-Birth, and the Resurrection. Panin also highlights the *Book of Revelation*, where the number 'seven' shines not only on the surface, but in the entire literary architecture: seven churches, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders, seven last plagues, and many other groupings. The point he makes is that the Apostle John did not merely like the number 'seven', but that the Bible itself appears saturated with an ordered numerical-design from start to end. But we must be careful not to oversimplify Panin's work: his case was never that one or two striking examples would prove divine inspiration.

Rather, Panin's case was cumulative. One coincidence may be dismissed. Two may be shrugged off. But if the same order is found at the level of letters, words, vocabulary, grammar, names, arrangement, and cross-book structure, the law-of-probability begins to press hard on the mind. It's for this reason, he spoke of the likelihood of these mathematical-patterns running into the billions. His contention was that if human logic is worth anything at all, then the data forces us toward one of two conclusions: either the

biblical-writers were unparalleled mathematical geniuses consciously controlling every syllable across centuries and across books they had not yet seen, or a Mind higher than man had been superintending the text. This question becomes even sharper when we consider one of his most striking claims: the numerical and mathematical structures do not stop at individual passages, but extends to the ordering and authorship of the Books of the Bible themselves. Panin explains that in the Hebrew and Greek textual tradition(s), these books were arranged in a sequence different from the English Bible that we have today.

Panin examined the whole collection as a set: 66 books, which is six elevens. The anonymous books and non-anonymous books also divide in ordered ways. Books assigned to one author, and books assigned to authors of multiple books, show patterns related to the number eleven. The sum of the positions of certain books, the numerical-values of the names of the authors, and the proportions between different groups of books, are all said to yield consistent numerical-relationships. The argument here is especially important, as no individual writer could have controlled the final shape of the biblical-canon, in this way and by his own power. If the structure is really there, then it points to a 'design' above and beyond the consciousness of their human authors. This is where the issue of inerrancy in the original languages becomes especially relevant: Panin did not base his work on English translations of the Bible. He used the Hebrew-text of the Old Testament (Received-Hebrew) and the Greek-text of the New Testament (Westcott and Hort), as the basis for many of his calculations. Whether one agrees with every textual decision or not, the essential point remains: the numerical-argument that Panin makes, is based on the original language-text, not the wording of a later translation.

This matters because when Christians say the Bible is inerrant, they are not claiming that every translation is perfect in every phrase. They are saying that the Word of God, as originally given by the Holy Spirit through the prophets and the apostles, is true and trustworthy in every part. Panin's work may thus be presented as one more line of evidence supporting this conviction. Another feature of Panin's work, is the way certain numbers are associated with certain themes: for example, the number 'eight' is the number linked with 'new-life' and 'resurrection', and Panin points out that the Greek name for "Jesus" carries a value of 888. It goes on to note that titles connected with Christ such as "Savior," "Lord," and "Messiah" also exhibit numerical-relationships, involving 'eight.' The last book of the Bible, the *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, contains 888 Greek letters. Whether one assesses all of these details as compelling or not, the cumulative point is again the same: the biblical-text presents not just isolated patterns, but a sustained numerical symbolism that is integrated with significant meaning.

Moving on, Panin presents the number 'nine' as associated with 'finality' or 'completion.' He references the value of key opening phrases in *Genesis*, to

the 9-Gifts of the Spirit, the 9-fold Fruit of the Spirit, the word “Amen,” and the ninth-hour at which Christ declared, “*It is finished.*” The number ‘thirteen’ is associated with darker themes, and linked with names and titles for Satan. Here again, we caution against building doctrine on arithmetic alone. The stronger purpose of BN is not to turn the Bible into a codebook of lucky and unlucky numbers, but to understand that there appears to be a meaningful-order in the very fabric of the entire Biblical-text. One of the most compelling arguments with Panin’s research in particular, and with BN in general, is the challenge of imitation: Panin reportedly challenged critics and mathematicians to produce even one intelligent paragraph of a few hundred words that displayed a comparable numerical-design. It appears that no one, at the time, met this challenge. Why is this important? It’s important because it helps ordinary people see the issue in practical terms.

We are not talking about someone stumbling into a few patterns, after the fact. We are talking about a structure so interwoven that, if it were man-made, it would require deliberate control at a level beyond ordinary human ability. And remember: the Bible was written by many men over many centuries, in different circumstances, and with different backgrounds. Yet Panin argued that the same numerical-fingerprint runs from *Genesis* through to *Revelation*. If this is true, then the writers themselves cannot be the final explanation. The ultimate explanation must lie with the One who breathed the Scriptures. Panin did not limit himself to analysing the Bible alone: he examined Hebrew and Greek classics outside Scripture, and did not find the same phenomenon. He also did not find these features in books outside the recognized biblical-canon. This claim is significant for two reasons: first, it suggests that the numerical-structure is not merely a property of Hebrew and Greek literature, in general. Second, it supports the idea that the biblical-canon possesses a unique mark. In other words, the numerical-pattern is presented not only as evidence that the Bible is special and unique, but as evidence that the boundaries of the Bible also matter.

CRITICISMS

Critics have raised numerous and sometimes reasonable concerns about BN in general, and Panin's research in particular. They are as follows: circular reasoning appears endemic, selective text-editing, weakness with the probability-methods employed, similar patterns existing in non-biblical texts, and the worry that 'gematria' as an interpretive-method is unreliable and extra-biblical. There are additional concerns about selection bias, arguing that certain features are emphasized while others are ignored, and problematic statistical-assumptions that form the basis of Panin's probability calculations. While these criticisms deserve thoughtful consideration, they also remind us not to overstate what the evidence from BN actually proves. Nevertheless, they do not sufficiently erase the phenomenon of BN itself, nor the evidence Panin presented in his research. Critical reviewers, like Dr. A. B. King, report that many of Panin's calculations are verifiable. Dr. Thomas J. Piccone's review of Panin's work, presented portions of his research as corroborative, accessible and demonstrable. Whatever the case, to this day, no single, universally accepted, or 'court-style' refutation has formally and successfully disproved BN, or the significant claims Panin has made. It's also important to note that Panin has never claimed that BN proves the Bible: rather, his work stands alongside other evidence, such as fulfilled-prophecy, historical-reliability, and the transforming power of Scripture.



THE BOOK OF ESTHER

The *Book of Esther* in the Bible, has no direct reference to the Name of God. God's Name (Tetragrammaton) is never mentioned, and this is the only Book of the Bible, with this feature. The Tetragrammaton refers to the 4 Hebrew-letters (YHWH/YHVH, יהוה: yodh, he, waw, he) that constitute the sacred and proper Name of God, in the Hebrew Bible. Often referred to as the 'four-letters', it's the unspeakable Name of God, and transliterated in the Bible, as 'Yahweh' or 'Jehovah.' The Tetragrammaton, however, is veiled as an acrostic in various parts of the *Book of Esther*, and it's only revealed when this Book is studied in its' original language. The *Book of Esther* is unusual in this respect, and this 'anomaly' is widely recognized by both Jewish and Christian scholars. A review of the available traditional, scholarly, and critical sources, reveal a long-standing, interpretive tradition that establishes this claim as real, old, and text-based. In any event, scholars do not treat this as a defect, but as part of the Book's theology: God is hidden yet active, working through providence, rather than open miracle.

Modern scholarship further recognizes the striking absence of overt religious language in the *Book of Esther*. This matters because the acrostic-theory is an attempt to explain how God may still be present in the Book, even when His Name is not openly written. That said, the Tetragrammaton appears four times in the *Book of Esther* in acrostic-form: these acrostics are shaped from either the initial-letters or the final-letters, of the four consecutive words that consist the Tetragrammaton. While a common Christian interpretation adds a fifth hidden divine-reference, often identified as a form of "I-AM" in *Esther* 7:5, the four YHWH-acrostics are the more widely repeated core-claim. The four-verses commonly cited are as follows: *Esther* 1:20; *Esther* 5:4; *Esther* 5:13; and *Esther* 7:7. Two of these acrostics are read 'forward', and the remaining two are read 'backward', and interpreters attach symbolic-meaning to this directionality. Whatever the case, this phenomenon of the *Book of Esther* is not a modern internet-invention: it has real and actual historical depth.

While the *Book of Esther* uniquely omits God's Name (on the surface), at key turning-points in the Book's story, the Tetragrammaton appears as a hidden-acrostic. This appears to fit the Book's larger theological-message well, as the *Book of Esther* is full of 'reversals' and providential-timing. So the notion of a 'hidden' divine-name seem, to many readers, as the perfect literary match for the book's overall theme. Even some modern interpreters who do not insist on the acrostics, agree. Nonetheless, the Esther-acrostics is stand-alone, and this 'anomaly' stands-apart from BN in general, and Panin's work in particular. Even if BN is set-aside as proof of Scripture's divine-origin, critics are hard-pressed to set-aside the 'anomaly' of the Esther-acrostics.

These acrostics remain an unexplained mystery, defying human-logic and human-ability: yet, it's still accepted by both Jewish and Christian scholars. They just cannot explain how they got there. It's worth noting that BN and the Esther-acrostics depend on features visible only in the original Hebrew and Greek texts, and both concern structures concealed under these texts.

In light of the foregoing, it's our assessment that BN and the Esther-acrostics are evidence pointing to a divine-seal or 'watermark' that the Bible is the inspired Word of God: however, while BN remains disputed, this claim may not be made about the Esther-acrostics. The Esther-acrostics are stand-alone, and they stand-apart from BN. Yet, both BN and the Esther-acrostics rely on similar data: while the Esther-acrostics are limited in form and number (4 main instances), BN is extensive, systematic, and applies to entire Books of the Bible. While the Esther-acrostics are literary and qualitative, BN is statistical and quantitative. While the Esther-acrostics are a localized literary-phenomenon, BN is a global mathematical-system. The Esther-acrostics are simple enough to verify, but BN involves layers upon layers of counting, grouping and factoring. The Esther-acrostics say, 'God's Name is hidden in the text', but BN says, 'the entire structure is divinely inspired and mathematically sound.' These data-points are consistent with the idea of divine authorship, especially when seen alongside the broader witness of Scripture. Notwithstanding, both BN and the Esther-acrostics are clear evidence that the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

OTHER RELIGIOUS TEXTS

Our assessment considered the possibility of the BN-process successfully applied to religious texts from other belief systems or philosophies. For this purpose, we looked at three religious texts from Hinduism (Bhagavad-Gita), Taoism (Tao-I-Ching) and Islam (Quaran). The Bhagavad-Gita and other broader Hindu-texts consist of highly structured poetry (the 'Sanskrit-meter'), philosophical-symmetry and repetitions: they're primarily designed for rote-memorization and they're of an oral, formulaic structure. They also do not have any known alphabetic acrostics or scribal 'anomalies' as in the *Book of Esther*. And the reason is because the Gita draws from an oral-tradition that was later written down. The design of the Gita is also metrical, philosophical and not 'letter-based': as a consequence, it does not possess the same mathematical-quality that the Bible has. Likewise, the Tao-I-Ching, is a structured body of poetic work that consists of parallel teachings and a balanced philosophical symmetry: it does not possess any alphabetic acrostics and has no letter-based numerical systems. In this regard, it must be noted that classical Chinese writing is logographic or character-based, and thus lacks the potential of an acrostic system like you'll find in Hebrew.

The Quaran appears to be the closest comparison to the Bible, in certain respects: it has a structured linguistic pattern that bears out in the texts' repetition and symmetry, and in the ring-composition or chiasmatic-structure. Further, it also consists of 'mysterious-letters' or 'muqatta'at', that are single or grouped letters at the start of certain chapters. However, the meaning of these single or grouped letters is unknown and closely debated. These aforesaid linguistic characteristics of the Quaran are the closest parallel to a textual anomaly, the same of which is extensive in the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. Additionally, the Quaran does not possess any of the scribal marks as do the Masoretic-texts of the Bible, and no alphabetic acrostics comparable to the *Book of Esther*, the *Psalms* or *Lamentations*. Some modern claims point to the number 'nineteen' in the Quaran as having the same quality and quantity, as with specific numbers in the Bible: however, these arguments face the same criticisms, levelled against BN and Panin's research. In conclusion, when other religious texts are compared to the Bible, only the Bible is able to satisfy the following 5 parameters: a unique literary structure, an alphabet-based acrostic design, a scribal anomaly-pattern, an extensive letter-number system, and a hidden-pattern claim that's verifiable. In these respects, the Bible is unique.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of what Panin and others have discovered with BN are profound. The conclusions that potentially arise from this are extensive and they are monumental. 'But could not a clever writer simply decide to use a favorite number and force a few patterns into the text?' That's a fair question. But Panin, and others who are experts with this body-of-work, were not talking about a few random coincidences: they point to a system of astonishing mathematical complexity and the examples provided aforesaid are evidence. Now, honesty requires us to state something important and critical: BN is not mainstream biblical-scholarship and rightly so. However, and as a consequence, many have never heard of it. For those who have, they remain unconvinced or uninterested. Additionally, it appears that critics of BN often dismiss it, not because they've sufficiently addressed it from an academic standpoint, but because they do not wish to be bound by its implications. That does not mean that every question has to be settled to everyone's satisfaction: but it does mean that this issue cannot simply be waved away with a shrug.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Mathematics is not moved by fashion. If the numbers are there, they are there. And if these relationships hold, they must be explained. And if they cannot be explained by accident, literary cleverness, or human planning, then they stand as a serious witness to the divine origin of the Biblical-text. Alongside Panin and BN, there are other lines of evidence pointing to the inerrancy of Scripture: the Esther-acrostics are some examples to name a few. Collectively, they reinforce the same broad conclusion: the Bible repeatedly displays a level of precision that strains a purely human explanation. Taken together with historical-accuracy, scientific-accuracy, fulfilled-prophecy, and the transformative Power of the Gospel of Christ, the numerical or mathematical evidence of the Biblical-text, becomes part of a much larger case. No single strand carries the whole 'rope' by itself, but together that 'rope' is strong.

BN in general and Panin's work specifically, do not replace Faith, and it will not save anyone from condemnation in hell, as a consequence of refusing Christ and His Work at Calvary. A person may hear all the mathematics in the world but still refuse Christ, Who alone saves, heals and delivers. In the final analysis, the real value of the evidence proffered here, lies chiefly with its capacity to confirm the Faith of a Believer-in-Christ, and remove the excuse that the Bible can be dismissed casually. It's the Holy Spirit alone Who can and will bring conviction to a lost soul: but for this to happen, this great Gospel of Christ Jesus must be declared, proclaimed and preached. Yet God, in His Mercy, allows different 'confirmations' for different people. Some people are moved by history. Some are moved by fulfilled-prophecy. Some are moved by the Majesty of Christ. And yet some others are moved by the stubborn force of numbers. In this respect, BN may be understood as one of God's great Witnesses in an age that prides itself on science, proof, and measurable certainty. So where does all of this leave us?

It leaves us with a Bible that appears, by Panin's own reckoning, marked by a depth of order no unaided human mind could have created. It leaves us with the reminder that every letter mattered in the languages in which God first gave His Word. It leaves us with a serious challenge to the common claim that the Bible is a mere human religious document. And it leaves us with renewed reason to believe that the Bible is not a patchwork of human guesses, but the inspired Word of the living God. In the end, the force of Panin's testimony is not that it turns the Bible into a mathematics textbook. It's that the Bible points to Something or Someone beyond itself. The numerical-structure, if that evidence is sound, is like a divine-seal pressed into wax, or like a watermark held up to the light. It's not the whole letter,

but it sure authenticates the Message. It tells us that behind the many writers of the Bible, stood one Author. Behind the long centuries of time, stood one Mind. Behind the words of the prophets, the psalmists, the evangelists, and the apostles, stood the Holy Spirit of God. And if this is true, then the right response is not admiration for arithmetic, but reverence for the God Who still speaks. The right response is to put your trust in the Son of God, Christ Jesus, of Whom the Scriptures still speak. The same One Who loves you, and Who gave His Life for you.

BN will not save anyone, nor does it replace Faith in Christ and in His great Gospel. BN does not supersede the Gospel and the Scriptures declare that Faith comes by hearing and believing the Word of God (*Romans 10:17*). The purpose of BN, at best, is not to create a new 'foundation' for the Gospel, but to strengthen our confidence in the one that already exists. For those who believe, BN should be a confirmation or reminder that the Scriptures are not loosely assembled human reflections, but a unified revelation of Christ Jesus and His Work at Calvary's Cross. For those who doubt, it presents a challenge: if the 'patterns' are real, then they must be explained. In the end, the force of BN lies not in turning the Bible into a mathematical puzzle, but in pointing beyond itself to the God Who inspired it. If the numerical-structure is genuine, then it functions like a divine 'watermark' in paper: unseen until held up to the light of God's Love and Mercy. Something that's impossible to ignore once discovered. What emerges is meaningful: while BN is not absolute proof in the strictest academic sense, it does offer evidence that's difficult to dismiss casually. For the purpose of Scripture is not to impress with structure, but to reveal the true Savior of the world: Christ Jesus, the Son of God.

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