

STUDY III

THE BIBLE AS A DIVINE REVELATION VIEWED IN THE LIGHT OF REASON

The Claims of the Bible and its Surface Evidence of Credibility--Its Antiquity and Preservation--Its Moral Influence--Motives of the Writers--General Character of the Writings--The Books of Moses--The Law of Moses--Peculiarities of the Government Instituted by Moses--It was not a System of Priestcraft--Instructions to Civil Rulers--Rich and Poor on a Common Level Before the Law--Safeguards Against Tampering With the Rights of the People--The Priesthood Not a Favored Class, How Supported, etc.--Oppression of Foreigners, Widows, Orphans and Servants Guarded Against--The Prophets of the Bible--Is There a Common Bond of Union Between the Law, the Prophets and the New Testament Writers?--Miracles Not Unreasonable--The Reasonable Conclusion.

THE Bible is the torch of civilization and liberty. Its influence for good in society has been recognized by the greatest statesmen, even though they for the most part have looked at it through the various glasses of conflicting creeds, which, while upholding the Bible, grievously misrepresent its teachings. The grand old book is unintentionally but woefully misrepresented by its friends, many of whom would lay down life on its behalf; and yet they do it more vital injury than its foes, by claiming its support to their long-revered misconceptions of its truth, received through the traditions of their fathers. Would that such would awake, re-examine their oracle, and put to confusion its enemies by disarming them of their weapons!

Since the light of nature leads us to expect a fuller revelation of God than that which nature supplies, the reasonable, thinking mind will be prepared to examine the claims of anything purporting to be a divine revelation, which

bears a reasonable surface evidence of the truthfulness of such claims. The Bible claims to be such a revelation from

God, and it does come to us with sufficient surface evidence as to the probable correctness of its claims, and gives us a reasonable hope that closer investigation will disclose more complete and positive evidence that it is indeed the Word of God.

The Bible is the oldest book in existence; it has outlived the storms of thirty centuries. Men have endeavored by every means possible to banish it from the face of the earth: they have hidden it, burned it, made it a crime punishable with death to have it in possession, and the most bitter and relentless persecutions have been waged against those who had faith in it; but still the book lives. Today, while many of its foes slumber in death, and hundreds of volumes written to discredit it and to overthrow its influence, are long since forgotten, the Bible has found its way into every nation and language of earth, over two hundred different translations of it having been made. The fact that this book has survived so many centuries, notwithstanding such unparalleled efforts to banish and destroy it, is at least strong circumstantial evidence that the great Being whom it claims as its Author has also been its Preserver.

It is also true that the moral influence of the Bible is uniformly good. Those who become careful students of its pages are invariably elevated to a purer life. Other writings upon religion and the various sciences have done good and have ennobled and blessed mankind, to some extent; but all other books combined have failed to bring the joy, peace and blessing to the groaning creation that the Bible has brought to both the rich and the poor, to the learned and the unlearned. The Bible is not a book to be read merely: it is a book to be studied with care and thought; for God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts, and his ways than

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our ways. And if we would comprehend the plan and thoughts of the infinite God, we must bend all our energies to that important work. The richest treasures of truth do not always lie on the surface.

This book throughout constantly points and refers to one prominent character, Jesus of Nazareth, who, it claims, was the Son of God. From beginning to end his name, and office, and work, are made prominent. That a man called Jesus of Nazareth lived, and was somewhat noted, about the time indicated by the writers of the Bible, is a fact of history outside the Bible, and it is variously and fully corroborated. That this Jesus was crucified because he had

rendered himself offensive to the Jews and their priesthood is a further fact established by history outside the evidence furnished by the New Testament writers. The writers of the New Testament (except Paul and Luke) were the personal acquaintances and disciples of Jesus of Nazareth, whose doctrines their writings set forth.

The existence of any book implies motive on the part of the writer. We therefore inquire, What motives could have inspired these men to espouse the cause of this person? He was condemned to death and crucified as a malefactor by the Jews, the most religious among them assenting to and demanding his death, as one unfit to live. And in espousing his cause, and promulgating his doctrines, these men braved contempt, deprivation and bitter persecution, risked life itself, and in some cases even suffered martyrdom. Admitting that while he lived Jesus was a remarkable person, in both his life and his teaching, what motive could there have been for any to espouse his cause after he was dead?--especially when his death was so ignominious? And if we suppose that these writers invented their narratives, and that Jesus was their imaginary or ideal hero, how absurd it would be to suppose that sane men, after claiming

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that he was the Son of God, that he had been begotten in a supernatural way, had supernatural powers by which he had healed lepers, restored sight to those born blind, caused the deaf to hear, and even raised the dead--how very absurd to suppose that they would wind up the story of such a character by stating that a little band of his enemies executed him as a felon, while all his friends and disciples, and among them the writers themselves, forsook him and fled in the trying moment?

The fact that profane history does not agree in some respects with these writers should not lead us to regard their records as untrue. Those who do thus conclude should assign and prove some motive on the part of these writers for making false statements. What motives could have prompted them? Could they reasonably have hoped thereby for fortune, or fame, or power, or any earthly advantage? The poverty of Jesus' friends, and the unpopularity of their hero himself with the great religionists of Judea, contradict such a thought; while the facts that he died as a malefactor, a disturber of the peace, and that he was made of no reputation, held forth no hope of enviable fame or earthly advantage to those who should attempt to

re-establish his doctrine. On the contrary, if such had been the object of those who preached Jesus, would they not speedily have given it up when they found that it brought disgrace, persecution, imprisonment, stripes and even death? Reason plainly teaches that men who sacrificed home, reputation, honor and life; who lived not for present gratification; but whose central aim was to elevate their fellowmen, and who inculcated morals of the highest type, were not only possessed of a motive, but further that their motive must have been pure and their object grandly sublime. Reason further declares that the testimony of such men, actuated only by pure and good motives, is worthy of

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ten times the weight and consideration of ordinary writers. Nor were these men fanatics: they were men of sound and reasonable mind, and furnished in every case a reason for their faith and hope; and they were perseveringly faithful to those reasonable convictions.

And what we have here noticed is likewise applicable to the various writers of the Old Testament. They were, in the main, men notable for their fidelity to the Lord; and this history as impartially records and reproves their weaknesses and shortcomings as it commends their virtues and faithfulness. This must astonish those who presume the Bible to be a manufactured history, designed to awe men into reverence of a religious system. There is a straightforwardness about the Bible that stamps it as truth. Knaves, desirous of representing a man as great, and especially if desirous of presenting some of his writings as inspired of God, would undoubtedly paint such a one's character blameless and noble to the last degree. The fact that such a course has not been pursued in the Bible is *reasonable* evidence that it was not fraudulently gotten up to deceive.

Having, then, reason to *expect* a revelation of God's will and plan, and having found that the Bible, which claims to be that revelation, was written by men whose motives we see no reason to impugn, but which, on the contrary, we see reason to approve, let us examine the character of the writings claimed as inspired, to see whether their teachings correspond with the character we have *reasonably* imputed to God, and whether they bear internal evidence of their truthfulness.

The first five books of the New Testament and several of the Old Testament are narratives or histories of facts known to the writers and vouched for by their characters. It

is manifest to all that it did not require a special revelation simply to tell the truth with reference to matters with which

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they were intimately and fully acquainted. Yet, since God desired to make a revelation to men, the fact that these histories of passing events have a bearing on that revelation would be a sufficient ground to make the inference a reasonable one, that God would supervise, and so arrange, that the honest writer whom he selected for the work should be brought in contact with the needful facts. The credibility of these historic portions of the Bible rests almost entirely upon the characters and motives of their writers. Good men will not utter falsehoods. A pure fountain will not give forth bitter waters. And the united testimony of these writings silences any suspicion that their authors would say or do evil, that good might follow.

It in no way invalidates the truthfulness of certain books of the Bible, such as Kings, Chronicles, Judges, etc., when we say that they are simply truthful and carefully kept histories of prominent events and persons of their times. When it is remembered that the Hebrew Scriptures contain history, as well as the law and the prophecies, and that their histories, genealogies, etc., were the more explicit in detailing circumstances because of the expectancy that the promised Messiah would come in a particular line from Abraham, we see a reason for the recording of certain facts of history considered indelicate in the light of this twentieth century. For instance, a clear record of the origin of the nations of the Moabites and of the Ammonites, and of their relationship to Abraham and the Israelites, was probably the necessity in the historian's mind for a full history of their nativity. (*Gen. 19:36-38*) Likewise, a very detailed account of Judah's children is given, of whom came David, the king, through whom the genealogy of Mary, Jesus' mother, as well as that of Joseph, her husband (*Luke 3:23,31,33,34; Matt. 1:2-16*), is traced back to Abraham. Doubtless the necessity of thoroughly establishing the pedigree

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was the more important, since of this tribe (*Gen. 49:10*) was to come the ruling King of Israel, as well as the promised Messiah, and hence the minutiae of detail not given in other instances. *Gen. 38*

There may be similar or different reasons for other historic

facts recorded in the Bible, of which by and by we may see the utility, which, were it not a history, but simply a treatise on morals, might without detriment be omitted; though no one can reasonably say that the Bible anywhere countenances impurity. It is well, furthermore, to remember that the same facts may be more or less delicately stated in any language; and that while the translators of the Bible were, rightly, too conscientious to omit any of the record, yet they lived in a day less particular in the choice of refined expressions than ours; and the same may be surmised of the early Bible times and habits of expression. Certainly the most fastidious can find no objection on this score to any expression of the New Testament.

The Books of Moses and the

Laws Therein Promulgated

The first five books of the Bible are known as the Five Books of Moses, though they nowhere mention his name as their author. That they were written by Moses, or under his supervision, is a reasonable inference; the account of his death and burial being properly added by his secretary. The omission of the positive statement that these books were written by Moses is no proof against the thought; for had another written them to deceive and commit a fraud, he would surely have claimed that they were written by the great leader and statesman of Israel, in order to make good his imposition. (See *Deut. 31:9-27*.) Of one thing we are certain, Moses did lead out of Egypt the Hebrew nation. He did organize them as a nation under the laws set forth in

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these books; and the Hebrew nation, by common consent, for over three thousand years, has claimed these books as a gift to them from Moses, and has held them so sacred that a jot or tittle must not be altered--thus giving assurance of the purity of the text.

These writings of Moses contain the only credible history extant, of the epoch which it traverses. Chinese history affects to begin at creation, telling how God went out on the water in a skiff, and, taking in his hand a lump of earth, cast it into the water. That lump of earth, it claims, became this world, etc. But the entire story is so devoid of reason that

the merest child of intelligence would not be deceived by it. On the contrary, the account given in Genesis starts with the reasonable assumption that a God, a Creator, an intelligent First Cause, already existed. It treats not of God's having a beginning, but of his work and of its beginning and its systematic orderly progress--"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Then stepping over the origin of the earth without detail or explanation, the narrative of the six days [epochs] of preparing it for man proceeds. That account is substantially corroborated by the accumulating light of science for four thousand years; hence it is far more reasonable to accept the claim that its author, Moses, was divinely inspired, than to assume that the intelligence of one man was superior to the combined intelligence and research of the rest of the race in three thousand years since, aided by modern implements and millions of money.

Look next at the system of laws laid down in these writings. They certainly were without an equal, either in their day or since, until this twentieth century; and the laws of this century are based upon the principles laid down in the Mosaic Law, and framed in the main by men who acknowledged the Mosaic Law as of divine origin.

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The Decalogue is a brief synopsis of the whole law. Those Ten Commandments enjoin a code of worship and morals that must strike every student as remarkable; and if never before known, and now found among the ruins and relics of Greece, or Rome, or Babylon (nations which have risen and fallen again, long since those laws were given), they would be regarded as marvelous if not supernatural. But familiarity with them and their claims has begotten measurable indifference, so that their real greatness is unnoticed except by the few. True, those commandments do not teach of Christ; but they were given, not to Christians, but to Hebrews; not to teach faith in a ransom, but to convince men of their sinful state, and need of a ransom. And the substance of those commandments was grandly epitomized by the illustrious founder of Christianity, in the words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"; and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." *Mark 12:30,31*

The government instituted by Moses differed from all others, ancient and modern, in that it claimed to be that of

the Creator himself, and the people were held accountable to him; their laws and institutions, civil and religious, claimed to emanate from God, and, as we shall presently see, were in perfect harmony with what reason teaches us to be God's character. The Tabernacle, in the center of the camp, had in its "Most Holy" apartment a manifestation of Jehovah's presence as their King, whence by supernatural means they received instruction for the proper administration of their affairs as a nation. An order of priests was established, which had complete charge of the Tabernacle, and through them alone access and communion with Jehovah was permitted. The first thought of some in this connection would perhaps be: "Ah! there we have the object of

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their organization: with them, as with other nations, the priests ruled the people, imposing upon their credulity and exciting their fears for their own honor and profit." But hold, friend; let us not too hastily assume anything. Where there is such good opportunity for testing this matter by the facts, it would not be reasonable to jump to conclusions without the facts. The unanswerable evidences are contrary to such suppositions. The rights and the privileges of the priests were limited; they were given no civil power whatever, and wholly lacked opportunity for using their office to impose upon the rights or consciences of the people; and this arrangement was made by Moses, a member of the priestly line.

As God's representative in bringing Israel out of Egyptian bondage, the force of circumstances had centralized the government in his hand, and made the meek Moses an autocrat in power and authority, though from the meekness of his disposition he was in fact the overworked servant of the people, whose very life was being exhausted by the onerous cares of his position. At this juncture a civil government was established, which was virtually a democracy.

Let us not be misunderstood: Regarded as unbelievers would esteem it, Israel's government was a democracy, but regarded in the light of its own claims, it was a theocracy, i.e., a divine government; for the laws given by God, through Moses, permitted of no amendments: they must neither add to nor take from their code of laws. Thus seen, Israel's government was different from any other civil government, either before or since. "The Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be elders of the people and officers over

them; and bring them unto the Tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee. And I will come down and talk with thee there, and I will take of the

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spirit which is upon thee and will put it upon them, and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not alone." (*Num. 11:16,17*. See also verses *24* to *30* for an example of true and guileless statesmanship and meekness.) Moses, rehearsing this matter, says: "So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known [of influence], and made them heads over you: captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes." *Deut. 1:15; Exod. 18:13-26*

Thus it appears that this distinguished lawgiver, so far from seeking to perpetuate or increase his own power by placing the government of the people under the control of his direct relatives, of the priestly tribe, to use their religious authority to fetter the rights and liberties of the people, on the contrary introduced to the people a form of government calculated to cultivate the spirit of liberty. The histories of other nations and rulers show no parallel to this. In every case the ruler has sought his own aggrandizement and greater power. Even in instances where such have aided in establishing republics, it has appeared from subsequent events that they did it through policy, to obtain favor with the people, and to perpetuate their own power. Circumstanced as Moses was, any ambitious man, governed by policy and attempting to perpetuate a fraud upon the people, would have worked for greater centralization of power in himself and his family; especially as this would have seemed an easy task from the religious authority being already in that tribe, and from the claim of this nation to be governed by God, from the Tabernacle. Nor is it supposable that a man capable of forming such laws, and of ruling such a people, would be so dull of comprehension as not to see what the tendency of his course would be. So completely was the government of the people put into their own hands,

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that though it was stipulated that the weightier cases which those governors could not decide were to be brought unto Moses, yet they themselves were the judges as to what cases went before Moses: "The cause which is too hard for you,

bring it unto me, and I will hear it." *Deut. 1:17*

Thus seen, Israel was a republic whose officers acted under a divine commission. And to the confusion of those who ignorantly claim that the Bible sanctions an established empire rule over the people, instead of "a government of the people by the people," be it noted that this republican form of civil government continued for over four hundred years. And it was then changed for that of a kingdom at the request of "The Elders," without the Lord's approval, who said to Samuel, then acting as a sort of informal president, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they shall say unto thee, for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them." At God's instance Samuel explained to the people how their rights and liberties would be disregarded, and how they would become servants by such a change; yet they had become infatuated with the popular idea, illustrated all around them in other nations. (*1 Sam. 8:6-22*) In considering this account of their *desire* for a king, who is not impressed with the thought that Moses could have firmly established himself at the head of a great empire without difficulty?

While Israel as a whole constituted one nation, yet the tribal division was ever recognized after Jacob's death. Each family, or tribe, by common consent, elected or recognized certain members as its representatives, or chiefs. This custom was continued even through their long slavery in Egypt. These were called chiefs or elders, and it was to these that Moses delivered the honor and power of civil government; whereas, had he desired to centralize power in himself

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and his own family, these would have been the last men to honor with power and office.

The instructions given those appointed to civil rulership as from God are a model of simplicity and purity. Moses declares to the people, in the hearing of these judges: "I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger [foreigner] that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's; and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it unto me, and I will hear it." (*Deut. 1:16,17*) Such hard cases were, after Moses' death, brought directly to the Lord through the High Priest, the answer being Yes or No, by the Urim and

Thummim.

In view of these *facts*, what shall we say of the theory which suggests that these books were written by knavish priests to secure to themselves influence and power over the people? Would such men for such a purpose forge records destructive to the very aims they sought to advance--records which prove conclusively that the great Chief of Israel, and one of their own tribe, at the instance of God, cut off the priesthood from civil power by placing that power in the hands of the people? Does any one consider such a conclusion reasonable?

Again, it is worthy of note that the laws of the most advanced civilization, in this twentieth century, do not more carefully provide that rich and poor shall stand on a common level in accountability before the civil law. Absolutely no distinction was made by Moses' laws. And as for the protection of the people from the dangers incident to some becoming very poor and others excessively wealthy and powerful,

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no other national law has ever been enacted which so carefully guarded this point. Moses' law provided for a restitution every fiftieth year--their Jubilee year. This law, by preventing the absolute alienation of property, thereby prevented its accumulation in the hands of a few. (*Lev. 25:9,13-23,27-30*)

In fact, they were taught to consider themselves brethren, and to act accordingly; to assist each other without compensation, and to take no usury of one another. See *Exod. 22:25; Lev. 25:36,37; Num. 26:52-56*.

All the laws were made public, thus preventing designing men from successfully tampering with the rights of the people. The laws were exposed in such a manner that any who chose might copy them; and, in order that the poorest and most unlearned might not be ignorant of them, it was made the duty of the priests to read them to the people at their septennial festivals. (*Deut. 31:10-13*) Is it reasonable to suppose that such laws and arrangements were designed by bad men, or by men scheming to defraud the people of their liberties and happiness? Such an assumption would be unreasonable.

In its regard for the rights and interests of foreigners, and of enemies, the Mosaic law was thirty-two centuries ahead of its times--if indeed the laws of the most civilized of today equal it in fairness and benevolence. We read:

"Ye shall have one manner of law as well for the stranger [foreigner] as for one of your own country; for I am the

Lord your God." *Exod. 12:49; Lev. 24:22*

"And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him; but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt."

Lev. 19:33,34

"If thou meet thine *enemy's* ox or his ass going astray, thou

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shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that *hateth thee* lying under his burden, wouldst thou cease to leave thy business and help him? Thou shalt surely leave it, to join with [assist] him." *Exod. 23:4,5*, margin

Even the dumb animals were not forgotten. Cruelty to these as well as to human beings was prohibited strictly. An ox must not be muzzled while threshing the grain; for the good reason that any laborer is worthy of his food. Even the ox and the ass must not plow together, because so unequal in strength and tread: it would be cruelty. Their rest was also provided for. *Deut. 25:4; 22:10; Exod. 23:12*

The priesthood may be claimed by some to have been a selfish institution, because the tribe of Levites was supported by the annual tenth, or tithe, of the individual produce of their brethren of the other tribes. This fact, stated thus, is an unfair presentation too common to skeptics, who, possibly ignorantly, thereby misrepresent one of the most remarkable evidences of God's part in the organization of that system, and that it was not the work of a selfish and scheming priesthood. Indeed, it is not infrequently misrepresented by a modern priesthood, which urges a similar system now, using that as a precedent, without mentioning the condition of things upon which it was founded, or its method of payment.

It was, in fact, founded upon the strictest equity. When Israel came into possession of the land of Canaan, the Levites certainly had as much right to a share of the land as the other tribes; yet, by God's express command, they got none of it, except certain cities or villages for residence, scattered among the various tribes, whom they were to serve in religious things. Nine times is this prohibition given, before the division of the land. Instead of the land, some equivalent should surely be provided them, and the *tithe* was

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therefore this reasonable and just provision. Nor is this all:

the tithe, though, as we have seen, a just debt, was not enforced as a tax, but was to be paid as a voluntary contribution.

And no threat bound them to make those contributions:

all depended upon their conscientiousness. The only exhortations to the people on the subject are as follows:

"Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth." (*Deut. 12:19*) "And the Levite that is within thy gates, thou shalt not forsake him; for he hath no part nor inheritance with thee" [in the land].

Deut. 14:27

Is it, we ask, reasonable to suppose that this order of things would have been thus arranged by selfish and ambitious priests?--an arrangement to disinherit themselves and to make them dependent for support upon their brethren? Does not reason teach us to the contrary?

In harmony with this, and equally inexplicable on any other grounds than those claimed--that God is the author of those laws--is the fact that no special provision was made for honoring the priesthood. In nothing would imposters be more careful than to provide reverence and respect for themselves, and severest penalties and curses upon those who misused them. But nothing of the kind appears: no special honor, or reverence, or immunity from violence or insult, is provided. The common law, which made no distinction between classes, and was no respecter of persons, was their only protection. This is the more remarkable because the treatment of servants, and strangers, and the aged, was the subject of special legislation. For instance: Thou shalt not vex nor oppress a *stranger, or widow, or fatherless child*; for if they cry at all unto me [to God] I will surely hear their cry; and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows and

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your children fatherless. (*Exod. 22:21-24; 23:9; Lev. 19:33,34*)

"Thou shalt not oppress an *hired servant* that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of strangers that are in thy land, within thy gates. At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it; lest he cry against thee unto the Lord and it be sin unto thee." (*Lev. 19:13; Deut. 24:14,15; Exod. 21:26,27*) "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honor the face of the old man." (*Lev. 19:32*. See also *Lev. 19:14*.) All this, yet nothing special for Priests, or Levites, or their tithes.

The sanitary arrangements of the law, so needful to a

poor and long-oppressed people, together with the arrangements and limitations respecting clean and unclean animals which might or might not be eaten, are remarkable, and would, with other features, be of interest if space permitted their examination, as showing that law to have been abreast with, if not in advance of, the latest conclusions of medical science on the subject. The law of Moses had also a typical character, which we must leave for future consideration; but even our hasty glance has furnished overwhelming evidence that this law, which constitutes the very framework of the entire system of revealed religion, which the remainder of the Bible elaborates, is truly a marvelous display of wisdom and justice, especially when its date is taken into consideration.

In the light of reason, all must admit that it bears no evidence of being the work of wicked, designing men, but that it corresponds exactly with what nature teaches to be the character of God. It gives evidence of his Wisdom, Justice and Love. And further, the evidently pious and noble lawgiver, Moses, denies that the laws were his own, and attributes them to God. (*Exod. 24:12; Deut. 9:9-11; Exod. 26:30;*

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Lev. 1:1) In view of his general character, and his commands to the people not to bear false witness, and to avoid hypocrisy and lying, is it reasonable to suppose that such a man bore false witness and palmed off his own views and laws for those of God? It should be remembered also that we are examining the present copies of the Bible, and that therefore the integrity for which it is so marked applies equally to the successors of Moses; for though bad men were among those successors, who did seek their own and not the people's good, it is evident that they did not tamper with the Sacred Writings, which are pure to this day.

The Prophets of the Bible

Glance now at the general character of the prophets of the Bible and their testimonies. A rather remarkable fact is that the prophets, with few exceptions, were not of the priestly class; and that in their day their prophecies were generally repugnant to the degenerating and time-serving priesthood, as well as to the idolatrously inclined people. The burden of their messages from God to the people was generally reproof for sin, coupled with warnings of coming

punishments, intertwined with which we find occasional promises of future blessings, after they should be cleansed from sin and should return to favor with the Lord. Their experiences, for the most part, were far from enviable: they were generally reviled, many of them being imprisoned and put to violent deaths. See *1 Kings 18:4,10,17,18; 19:10; Jer. 38:6; Heb. 11:32-38*. In some instances it was years after their death before their true character as God's prophets was recognized. But we speak thus of the prophetic writers whose utterances claim to be the direct inspiration of Jehovah. It is well in this connection that we should remember that in the giving of the law to Israel there was no priestly intervention: it was given by God to the people by the hand

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of Moses. (*Exod. 19:17-25; Deut. 5:1-5*) And, furthermore, it was made the duty of every man seeing a violation of the law to reprove the sinner. (*Lev. 19:17*) Thus all had the authority to teach and reprove; but since, as in our own day, the majority were absorbed in the cares of business, and became indifferent and irreligious, the few comparatively fulfilled this requirement by reproving sin and exhorting to godliness; and these preachers are termed "prophets" in both the Old and New Testaments. The term prophet, as generally used, signifies *public expounder*, and the public teachers of idolatry were also so called; for instance, "the prophets of Baal," etc. See *1 Cor. 14:1-6; 2 Pet. 2:1; Matt. 7:15; 14:5; Neh. 6:7; 1 Kings 18:40; Titus 1:12*.

Prophesying, in the ordinary sense of teaching, afterward became popular with a certain class, and degenerated into Phariseism--teaching, instead of God's commandments, the traditions of the ancients, thereby opposing the truth and becoming false prophets, or false teachers. *Matt. 15:2-9*

Out of the large class called prophets, Jehovah at various times made choice of some whom he specially commissioned to deliver messages, relating sometimes to things then at hand, at other times to future events. It is to the writings of this class, who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the holy Spirit, that we are now giving attention. They might with propriety be designated

Divinely Commissioned Prophets or Seers.

When it is remembered that these prophets were mainly laymen, drawing no support from the tithes of the priestly

tribe, and when, added to this, is the fact that they were frequently not only the reprovers of kings and judges, but also of priests (though they reproved not the office, but the personal sins of the men who filled it), it becomes evident that we could not reasonably decide that these prophets

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were parties to any league of priests, or others, to fabricate falsehood in the name of God. Reason in the light of facts contradicts such a suspicion.

If, then, we find no reason to impeach the motives of the various writers of the Bible, but find that the spirit of its various parts is righteousness and truth, let us next proceed to inquire whether there exists any link, or bond of union, between the records of Moses, those of the other prophets, and those of the New Testament writers. If we shall find one common line of thought interwoven throughout the Law and the Prophets and the New Testament writings, which cover a period of fifteen hundred years, this, taken in connection with the character of the writers, will be a good reason for admitting their claim--that they are divinely inspired --particularly if the theme common to all of them is a grand and noble one, comporting well with what sanctified common sense teaches regarding the character and attributes of God.

This we do find: One plan, spirit, aim and purpose pervades the entire book. Its opening pages record the creation and fall of man; its closing pages tell of man's recovery from that fall; and its intervening pages show the successive steps of the plan of God for the accomplishment of this purpose. The harmony, yet contrast, of the first three and the last three chapters of the Bible is striking. The one describes the first creation, the other the renewed or restored creation, with sin and its penal-curse removed; the one shows Satan and evil entering the world to deceive and destroy, the other shows his work undone, the destroyed ones restored, evil extinguished and Satan destroyed; the one shows the dominion lost by Adam, the other shows it restored and forever established by Christ, and God's will done in earth as in heaven; the one shows sin the producing cause of degradation,

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shame and death, the other shows the reward of righteousness to be glory, honor and life.

Though written by many pens, at various times, under

different circumstances, the Bible is not merely a collection of moral precepts, wise maxims and words of comfort. It is more: it is a reasonable, philosophical and harmonious statement of the causes of present evil in the world, its only remedy and the final results as seen by divine wisdom, which saw the end of the plan from before its beginning, marking as well the pathway of God's people, and upholding and strengthening them with exceeding great and precious promises to be realized in due time.

The teaching of Genesis, that man was tried in a state of original perfection in one representative, that he failed, and that the present imperfection, sickness and death are the results, but that God has not forsaken him, and will ultimately recover him through a redeemer, born of a woman (*Gen. 3:15*), is kept up and elaborated all the way through. The necessity of the death of a redeemer as a sacrifice for sins, and of his righteousness as a covering for our sin, is pointed out in the clothing of skins for Adam and Eve; in the acceptance of Abel's offerings; in Isaac on the altar; in the death of the various sacrifices by which the patriarchs had access to God, and of those instituted under the law and perpetuated throughout the Jewish age. The prophets, though credited with understanding but slightly the significance of some of their utterances (*1 Pet. 1:12*), mention the laying of the sins upon a person instead of a dumb animal, and in prophetic vision they see him who is to redeem and to deliver the race led "as a lamb to the slaughter," that "the chastisement of our peace was upon him," and that "by his stripes we are healed." They pictured him as "despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted

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with grief," and declared that "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." (*Isa. 53:3-6*) They told where this deliverer would be born (*Micah 5:2*), and when he should die, assuring us that it would be "not for himself." (*Dan. 9:26*) They mention various peculiarities concerning him--that he would be "righteous," and free from "deceit," "violence," or any just cause of death (*Isa. 53:8,9,11*); that he would be betrayed for thirty pieces of silver (*Zech. 11:12*); that he would be numbered among transgressors in his death (*Isa. 53:12*); that not a bone of him should be broken (*Psa. 34:20; John 19:36*); and that though he should die and be buried, his flesh would not corrupt, neither would he remain in the grave. *Psa. 16:10; Acts 2:31*

The New Testament writers clearly and forcibly, yet simply, record the fulfilment of all these predictions in Jesus of Nazareth, and by logical reasonings show that such a *ransom price* as he gave was needful, as already predicted in the Law and the Prophets, before the sins of the world could be blotted out. (*Isa. 1:18*) They trace the entire plan in a most logical and forcible manner, appealing neither to the prejudices nor to the passions of their hearers, but to their enlightened reason alone, furnishing some of the most remarkably close and cogent reasoning to be found anywhere on any subject. See *Rom. 5:17-19*, and onward to the 12th chapter.

Moses, in the Law, pointed not alone to a sacrifice, but also to a blotting out of sins and a blessing of the people under this great deliverer, whose power and authority he declares shall vastly exceed his own, though it should be "like unto" it. (*Deut. 18:15,19*) The promised deliverer is to bless not only Israel, but through Israel "all the families of the earth." (*Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4*) And notwithstanding the prejudices of the Jewish people to the contrary,

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the prophets continue the same strain, declaring that Messiah shall be also "for a light to lighten the Gentiles" (*Isa. 49:6; Luke 2:32*); that the Gentiles should come to him "from the ends of the earth" (*Jer. 16:19*); that his name "shall be great among the Gentiles" (*Mal. 1:11*); and that "the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all flesh shall see it together." *Isa. 40:5*. See also *Isa. 42:1-7*.

The New Testament writers claim a divine anointing which enabled them to realize the fulfilment of the prophecies concerning the sacrifice of Christ. They, though prejudiced as Jews to think of every blessing as limited to their own people (*Acts 11:1-18*), were enabled to see that while their nation would be blessed, all the families of the earth should be blessed also, with and through them. They saw also that, before the blessing of either Israel or the world, a selection would be made of a "little flock" from both Jews and Gentiles, who, being tried, would be found worthy to be made joint-heirs of the glory and honor of the Great Deliverer, and sharers with him of the honor of blessing Israel and all the nations. *Rom. 8:17*

These writers point out the harmony of this view with what is written in the Law and the Prophets; and the grandeur and breadth of the plan they present more than meets the most exalted conception of what it purports to be--

"Good tidings of great joy, which shall be unto all people."

The thought of Messiah as a ruler of not only Israel, but also of the world, suggested in the books of Moses, is the theme of all the prophets. The thought of the kingdom was uppermost also in the teaching of the apostles; and Jesus taught that we should pray, "Thy Kingdom come," and promised those a share in it who would first suffer for the truth, and thus prove themselves worthy.

This hope of the coming glorious kingdom gave all the faithful ones courage to endure persecution and to suffer

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reproach, deprivation and loss, even unto death. And in the grand allegorical prophecy which closes the New Testament, the worthy "Lamb that was slain" (*Rev. 5:12*), the worthy "overcomers" whom he will make kings and priests in his kingdom, and the trials and obstacles which they must overcome to be worthy to share that kingdom, are all faithfully portrayed. Then are introduced symbolic representations of the blessings to accrue to the world under that Millennial reign, when Satan shall be bound and Adamic death and sorrow wiped out, and when all the nations of earth shall walk in the light of the heavenly kingdom--the new Jerusalem.

The Bible, from first to last, holds out a doctrine found nowhere else, and in opposition to the theories of all the heathen religions--that a future life for the dead will come through a RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD. All the inspired writers expressed their confidence in a redeemer, and one declares that "in the morning," when God shall call them from the tomb, and they shall come forth, the wicked shall no longer hold the rulership of earth; for "The upright shall have dominion over them, in the morning." (*Psa. 49:14*) The resurrection of the dead is taught by the prophets; and the writers of the New Testament base all their hopes of future life and blessing upon it. Paul expresses it thus: "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain;...then they which are fallen asleep in Christ are *perished*. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept;...for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

1 Cor. 15:13-22

Like a watch, whose many wheels might at first seem superfluous, but whose slowest moving wheels are essential, so the Bible, composed of many parts, and prepared by many

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pens, is one complete and harmonious whole. Not a single part is superfluous, and though some parts take a more active and prominent place than others, all are useful and necessary. It is becoming popular among the so-called "advanced thinkers" and "great theologians" of the present day to treat lightly, or to ignore if they do not deny, many of the "miracles" of the Old Testament, calling them "old wives' fables." Of these are the accounts of Jonah and the great fish, Noah and the ark, Eve and the serpent, the standing still of the sun at the command of Joshua, and Balaam's speaking ass. Seemingly these wise men overlook the fact that the Bible is so interwoven and united in its various parts that to tear from it these miracles, or to discredit them, is to destroy or discredit the whole. For if the original accounts are false, those who repeated them were either falsifiers or dupes, and in either case it would be impossible for us to accept their testimony as divinely inspired. To eliminate from the Bible the miracles mentioned would invalidate the testimony of its principal writers, besides that of our Lord Jesus. The story of the fall is attested by Paul (*Rom. 5:17*); also Eve's beguilement by the serpent (*2 Cor. 11:3; 1 Tim. 2:14*). See also our Lord's reference to the latter in *Rev. 12:9 and 20:2*. The standing of the sun at the overthrow of the Amorites, as an evidence of the Lord's power, was evidently typical of the power to be displayed in the future, in "the day of the Lord," at the hand of him whom Joshua typified. This is attested by three prophets. (*Isa. 28:21; Habak. 2:1-3,13,14 and 3:2-11; Zech. 14:1,6,7*) The account of the speaking ass is confirmed by *Jude (verse 11)*, and by Peter (*2 Pet. 2:16*). And the great teacher, Jesus, confirms the narratives of Jonah and the great fish and of Noah and the flood. (*Matt. 12:40; 24:38,39; Luke 17:26*. See also *1 Pet. 3:20*.) Really these are no greater miracles than those performed by Jesus and the

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apostles, such as the turning of water into wine, the healing of diseases, etc.; and as a miracle, the awakening of the dead is most wonderful of all.

These miracles, not common to our experience, find parallels about us every day, which, being more common, are passed by unnoticed. The reproduction of living organisms, either animal or vegetable, is *beyond our comprehension*, as well

as beyond our power--hence miraculous. We can see the exercise of life principle, but can neither understand nor produce it. We plant two seeds side by side; the conditions, air, water, and soil, are alike; they *grow*, we cannot tell *how*, nor can the wisest philosopher explain this miracle. These seeds develop organisms of opposite tendencies; one creeps, the other stands erect; form, flower, coloring, everything differs, though the conditions were the same. Such miracles grow common to us, and we cease to remember them as such as we leave the wonderment of childhood; yet they manifest a power as much beyond our own, and beyond our limited intelligence, as the few miracles recorded in the Bible for special purposes, and as intended illustrations of omnipotence, and of the ability of the great Creator to overcome every obstacle and to accomplish all his will, even to our promised resurrection from the dead, the extermination of evil, and the ultimate reign of everlasting righteousness.

Here we rest the case. Every step has been tested by reason. We have found that there is a God, a supreme, intelligent Creator, in whom wisdom, justice, love and power exist in perfect harmony. We have found it reasonable to expect a revelation of his plans to his creatures capable of appreciating and having an interest in them. We have found the Bible, claiming to be that revelation, worthy of consideration. We have examined its writers, and their possible objects, in the light of what they taught; we have been

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astonished; and our *reason* has told us that such wisdom, combined with such purity of motive, was not the cunning device of crafty men for selfish ends. Reason has urged that it is far more probable that such righteous and benevolent sentiments and laws must be of God and not of men, and has insisted that they could not be the work of knavish priests. We have seen the harmony of testimony concerning Jesus, his ransom-sacrifice, and the resurrection and blessing of all as the outcome, in his glorious kingdom to come; and reason has told us that a scheme so grand and comprehensive, beyond all we could otherwise have reason to expect, yet built upon such reasonable deductions, must be the plan of God for which we seek. It cannot be the mere device of men, for even when revealed, it is almost too grand to be believed by men.

When Columbus discovered the Orinoco river, some one said he had found an island. He replied: "No such river as

that flows from an island. That mighty torrent must drain the waters of a continent." So the depth and power and wisdom and scope of the Bible's testimony convince us that not man, but the Almighty God, is the author of its plans and revelations. We have taken but a hasty glance at the surface claims of the Scriptures to be of divine origin, and have found them reasonable. Succeeding chapters will unfold the various parts of the plan of God, and will, we trust, give ample evidence to every candid mind that the Bible is a divinely inspired revelation, and that the length and breadth and height and depth of the plan it unfolds gloriously reflect the divine character, hitherto but dimly comprehended, but now more clearly seen in the light of the dawning Millennial Day.

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Truth Most Precious

Great truths are dearly bought. The common truth,
Such as men give and take from day to day,
Comes in the common walk of easy life,
Blown by the careless wind across our way.

Great truths are dearly won; not found by chance,
Nor wafted on the breath of summer dream;
But grasped in the great struggle of the soul,
Hard buffeting with adverse wind and stream.

Sometimes, 'mid conflict, turmoil, fear and grief,
When the strong hand of God, put forth in might,
Ploughs up the subsoil of the stagnant heart,
It brings some buried truth-seeds to the light.

Not in the general mart, 'mid corn and wine;
Not in the merchandise of gold and gems;
Not in the world's gay hall of midnight mirth,
Nor 'mid the blaze of regal diadems;

Not in the general clash of human creeds,
Nor in the merchandise 'twixt church and world,
Is truth's fair treasure found, 'mongst tares and weeds;
Nor her fair banner in their midst unfurled.

Truth springs like harvest from the well-ploughed fields,
Rewarding patient toil, and faith and zeal.
To those thus seeking her, she ever yields
Her richest treasures for their lasting weal.