

# The Old Testament and the Gospel of Christ

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The Christian religion is not a mere system of ideas, like the philosophy of Plato or Aristotle. It rests on a basis of historic facts. The great central fact of the gospel is thus expressed by Jesus himself: *"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life," John 3:16*; and by the apostle Paul thus: *"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." 1 Tim. 1:15*. With the appearance of God's Son in human nature were connected a series of mighty works, a body of divine teachings, the appointment of apostles and the establishment of the visible Christian church; all which are matters of historic record.

Nor is this all. It is the constant doctrine of Christ and his apostles that he came in accordance with the scriptures of the Old Testament, and that his religion is the fulfilment of the types and prophecies therein contained: *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." Matt. 5:17*. *"All things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me." Luke 24:44*. The facts of the New Testament connect themselves, therefore, immediately with those of the Old, so that the whole series constitutes an indivisible whole. The Bible is, from beginning to end, the record of a supernatural revelation made by God to men. As such, it embraces not only supernatural teachings, but supernatural facts also; and the teachings rest on the facts in such a way that both must stand or fall together.

This basis of supernatural facts, then, must be firmly maintained against unbelievers whose grand aim is to destroy the historic foundation of the gospel, at least so far as it contains supernatural manifestations of God to men. Thus they would rob it of its divine authority, and reduce it to a mere system of human doctrines, like the teachings of Socrates or Confucius, which men are at liberty to receive or reject as they think best. Could they accomplish this, they would be very willing to eulogize the character of Jesus, and extol the purity and excellence of his precepts. Indeed, it is the fashion of modern unbelievers, after doing what lies in their power to make the gospel a mass of "cunningly-devised fables" of human origin, to expatiate on the majesty and beauty of the Saviour's character, the excellence of his moral precepts, and the benign influence of his teachings. But the transcendent glory of our Lord's character is inseparable from his being as he claimed to be **the Son of God**, coming from God to men with supreme authority; and all the power of his gospel lies in its being received as a message from God. To make the gospel human, is to annihilate it, and with it the

hope of the world.

When the inquiry is concerning a long series of events intimately connected together so as to constitute one inseparable narrative, two methods of investigation are open to us. We may look at the train of events in the order of time from beginning to end; or we may select some one great event of especial prominence and importance as the central point of inquiry, and from that position look forward and backward. The latter of these two methods has some peculiar advantages, and will be followed in the present brief treatise. We begin with the great central fact of revelation already referred to, that "*the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*" *1 John 4:14*. When this is shown to rest on a foundation that cannot be shaken, the remainder of the work is comparatively easy. From the supernatural appearance and works of the Son of God, as recorded in the four gospels, the supernatural endowment and works of his apostles, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, and their authoritative teachings, as contained in their epistles, follow as a natural and even necessary sequel. Since, moreover, the universal rule of God's government and works is, "*first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear,*" (*Mark 4:28*), it is most reasonable to suppose that such a full and perfect revelation as that which God has made to us by his Son, which is certainly "the full corn in the ear," must have been preceded by exactly such preparatory prophecies as we find recorded in the Old Testament. Now Jesus of Nazareth appeared among the Jews, the very people that had the scriptures of the Old Testament, and had been prepared for his advent by the events recorded in them as no other nation was prepared. He came, too, as he and his apostles ever taught, to carry out the plan of redemption begun in them. From the position, then, of Christ's advent, as the grand central fact of redemption, we look backward and forward with great advantage upon the whole time-line of the written word.

Strong as are the evidences for the truth of the gospel narratives considered separately, they gain new strength, on the one side, from the mighty prophecies that preceded them and prepared the way for the advent of the Son of God; and on the other, from the mighty events that followed his advent in the apostolic age, and have been following ever since in the history of the Christian church. The divine origin of the Mosaic institutions can be shown on solid grounds, independently of the New Testament; but on how much broader and deeper a foundation are they seen to rest, when we find that they were preparatory to the incarnation of Jesus Christ. As in a burning mass, the heat and flame of each separate piece of fuel are increased by the surrounding fire, so in the plan of redemption, each separate revelation receives new light and glory from the revelations which precede and follow it. It is only when we view the revelations of the Bible as thus progressing "*from glory to glory,*" that we can estimate with certainty the proofs of their divine origin. The idea claimed by some that there could have been a conspiracy by men who made up and manufactured the Bible with such a series of foretold events, extending through many ages, and yet so connected together as to constitute a harmonious and consistent whole, is a simple ignorant absurdity. There is no explanation of the unity that pervades the supernatural facts of the written word, but that of its divine origin.

In strong contrast with this rational way of viewing the facts of the Bible as a grand whole, is the fragmentary method of critics. A doubt here, an insinuation there; a difficulty with this statement, an objection to certain verses, or a discrepancy taken out of context is their favorite way of assailing the Bible and the Gospel. Difficulties and objections should be candidly considered, and allowed their due weight; but they must not be allowed to override irrefragable proof.

The inseparable connection between the facts of the prophecies recorded in the Old Testament and those of the New; and finally, the genuineness of the books which constitute the canon of the Old Testament, with their authenticity and inspiration commend the Bible without question to the wise believer as the true word of God.

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