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THE EVIDENCE: RELIGION

BEFORE closing this succinct review of the lines of defense of the Old Testament Scriptures, we must emphasize briefly the strongest bulwark of them all, the undeniable uniqueness and superlative clearness and importance of the religious ideas contained in them.

A study of the religious systems of the Egyptians, Babylonians, and other ancient peoples, has revealed to us a groping after God, if haply they might find him; but nowhere among all the nations is it recorded that a clear apprehension of one living and true God—the creator and preserver, the guide, the judge, the saviour, and the sanctifier of His people—was attained. Other religions are outward, concerned with words and deeds. Their sins are offenses or delinquencies, their substitutions are material equivalents, their atonements are physical purifications, their resurrection is a groundless expectation, their judgment is without mercy, their immortality consigns to darkness and dust, and a future life of joy is at best for the few and great. The Old Testament religion is essentially inward. It is the religion of the mind and heart, of love, joy, *faith*, hope, and salvation through the grace of God alone. How ac-

count for this religion? It must have come either by derivation, evolution or revelation. The prophets say it came from God. No other theory of its origin can account for its uniqueness and its results, its superiority and its influence. The prophets and their ideas are facts in evidence, which all the quibbling of the critics cannot impugn. The prophets say they had their ideas from God. If not, whence? It cannot have come by derivation; for none of the other nations had the same ideas of God, creation, sin, and redemption.²⁷¹ If it came by revelation, the greatest of all miracles has happened involving all the rest. For if God spake through the prophets, His revelations of His will could not have been bound by the shackles of time and circumstance. The prophets who spake for Him spake not merely as the men of their own time, but as men of all time, as men who were spokesmen of Him who knows the end from the beginning, and has all power in heaven and on earth. The canon of the modern critical school that treats the prophets as the creatures of their time is antagonistic to this fundamental conception of the prophets' mission as it was enunciated by the prophets themselves. They say God spake *to* them and they spake *for* God. The critics say that they gave utterance to the spirit of the times (the *Zeitgeist*) and

²⁷¹ That it could not have been derived from the Babylonians, see my articles in the *Presbyterian and Reformed Review* for 1902 and the *Bible Student* for 1904.

that they were limited by the time and place of their birth. But, if this were all the source of their information, how then did it come, that not from the oracles of Thebes and Memphis, nor from the temples of Babylon, nor from the sacred precincts of Delphi, nor from the Sibyls and augurs of Rome, but from the deserts of Midian, and from the sheepfolds of Tekoa, and from the dungeons of Zedekiah, and from the lowly cots of captives on the banks of the Chebar and the Euphrates, came forth those magic words of hope and salvation and glory for a sin-cursed world that have made the desert hearts of all who heard them to rejoice and blossom like the rose in the sunlight of God's favor, in the revivifying atmosphere of His presence? God with us! This is the key to unlock the mysterious chambers of the Old Testament.