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OBSERVATIONS
UPON THE
PROPHECIES
OF
DANIEL,
AND THE
APOCALYPSE
OF
St. *JOHN*.
In Two Parts.
By Sir *ISAAC NEWTON*.

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To the Right Honourable
PETER
Lord *KING*,
Baron of *Ockham*, Lord High
Chancellor of *Great-Britain*.
My Lord,

I SHALL make no Apology for addressing the following Sheets to Your Lordship, who lived in a long Intercourse of Friendship with the Author; and, like him, amidst occupations [iv] of a different nature, made Religion your voluntary Study; and in all your Enquiries and Actions, have shewn the same inflexible Adherence to Truth and Virtue. I shall always reckon it one of the Advantages of my Relation to Sir Isaac Newton, that it affords me an opportunity of making this publick acknowledgment of the unfeigned Respect of,

My Lord,
Your Lordship's
most obedient, and
most humble Servant,

Benj. Smith.

PART I.
OBSERVATIONS
UPON THE
PROPHECIES
OF
DANIEL.
[1]

CHAPTER 1

*Introduction concerning the Compilers of
the books of the Old Testament.*

WHEN **Manasses** set up a carved image in the house of the Lord,¹ and built altars in the two courts of the house, to all the host of Heaven, and used enchantments and witchcraft, and familiar spirits, and for his great wickedness was invaded by the army of **Asserhadon** King of **Assyria**, and carried captive to **Babylon**; the book of the Law was lost till the eighteenth year of his grandson Josiah. Then **Hilkiah** the High Priest,² upon repairing the Temple, found it there: and the King lamented that their fathers had not done after the words of the book, and commanded that it should be read to the people, and caused the people to renew the holy covenant with God. This is the book of the Law now extant.

¹ 2 Chronicles 33:5-7

² 2 Chronicles 34

When **Shishak** came out of **Egypt** and spoiled the temple,³ and brought **Judah** into subjection to the monarchy of **Egypt** (which was in the fifth year of **Rehoboam**), the Jews continued under great troubles for about twenty years; being

“...without the true God, and without a teaching Priest, and without Law... And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the countries, and nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city, for God did vex them with all adversity.”⁴

But when **Shishak** was dead, and **Egypt** fell into troubles, **Judah** had quiet ten year;⁵ and in that time **Asa** built fenced cities in **Judah**, and got up an army of 580,000 men, with which, in the 15th year of his reign, he met and overcame **Zerah** the **Ethiopian**, who had conquered **Egypt** and **Lybia**, and **Troglodytica**, and came out with an army of 1,000,000 **Lybians** and **Ethiopians**, to recover the countries conquered by **Sesac**. And after this victory **Asa** dethroned his mother for idolatry, and he renewed the Altar,⁶ and brought new vessels of gold and silver into the Temple; and he and the people entered into a new covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers, upon pain of death to those who worshipped other gods; and his Son **Jehosaphat** took away the high places, and in the third year of his reign sent some of his Princes, and of the Priests and Levites, to teach in the cities of **Judah**: and they

³ 2 Chronicles 12:2-4, 8-9

⁴ 2 Chronicles 15:3, 5-6

⁵ 2 Chronicles 14:1, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12

⁶ 2 Chronicles 15:3, 12, 13, 16, 18

had the book of the Law with them, and went about throughout all the cities of **Judah** and taught the people. This is that book of the Law which was afterwards lost in the reign of **Manasses**, and found again in the reign of **Josiah**, and therefore it was written before the third year of **Jehosaphat**.

The same book of the Law was preserved and handed down to posterity by the **Samaritans**, and therefore was received by the ten Tribes before their captivity. For when the ten Tribes were captivated,⁷ a Priest of the captivity was sent back to **Bethel** by order of the King of **Assyria**, to instruct the new inhabitants of **Samaria**, in

*“the manner of the God of the land”*⁸

and the **Samaritans** had the **Pentateuch** from this Priest, as containing the law or “*manner of the God of the land,*” which he was to teach them. For they persevered in the religion which he taught them,⁹ joining with it the worship of their own gods; and by persevering in what they had been taught, they preserved this book of their Law in the original character of the **Hebrews**, while the two Tribes, after their return from **Babylon**, changed the character to that of the **Chaldees**, which they had learned at **Babylon**. And since the **Pentateuch** was received as the book of the Law, both by the two Tribes and by the ten Tribes, it follows that they received it before they became divided into two Kingdoms. For after the division, they received not laws from one another, but continued at variance. **Judah**

⁷ 2 Kings 17:27, 28, 32, 33

⁸ 2 Kings 17:27

⁹ 2 Kings 17:34, 41

could not reclaim **Israel** from the sin of **Jeroboam**, and **Israel** could not bring **Judah** to it. The **Pentateuch** therefore was the book of the Law in the days of **David** and **Solomon**. The affairs of the Tabernacle and Temple were ordered by **David** and **Solomon**, according to the Law of this book; and **David** in the 78th Psalm, admonishing the people to give ear to the Law of God, means the Law of this book. For in describing how their forefathers kept it not, he quotes many historical things out of the books of **Exodus** and **Numbers**.

The race of the Kings of **Edom**, before there reigned any King over **Israel**, is set down in the book of **Genesis**;¹⁰ and therefore that book was not written entirely in the form now extant, before the reign of **Saul**. The writer set down the race of those Kings till his own time, and therefore wrote before **David** conquered **Edom**. The **Pentateuch** is composed of the Law and the history of God's people together; and the history hath been collected from several books, such as were the history of the Creation composed by **Moses**,¹¹ the book of the generations of **Adam**,¹² and the book of the wars of the Lord.¹³ This book of wars contained what was done at the Red Sea, and in the journeying of **Israel** through the Wilderness, and therefore was begun by **Moses**. And **Joshua** might carry it on to the conquest of **Canaan**. For **Joshua** wrote some things in the book of the Law of God,¹⁴ and therefore might write his own wars in the book of wars, those being the principal wars of God. These were public books, and

¹⁰ Genesis 36:31

¹¹ Genesis 2:4

¹² Genesis 5:1

¹³ Numbers 21:14

¹⁴ Joshua 24:26

therefore not written without the authority of **Moses** and **Joshua**. And **Samuel** had leisure in the reign of **Saul**, to put them into the form of the books of **Moses** and **Joshua** now extant, inserting into the book of **Genesis**, the race of the Kings of **Edom**, until there reigned a King in **Israel**.

The book of the **Judges** is a continued history of the **Judges** down to the death of **Sampson**, and therefore was compiled after his death, out of the Acts of the **Judges**. Several things in this book are said to be done “*when there was no King in Israel*,”¹⁵ and therefore this book was written after the beginning of the reign of **Saul**. When it was written, the **Jebusites** dwelt in **Jerusalem**,¹⁶ and therefore it was written before the eighth year of **David**.¹⁷ The books of **Moses**, **Joshua**, and **Judges** contain one continued history, down from the Creation to the death of **Sampson**. Where the **Pentateuch** ends, the book of **Joshua** begins; and where the book of **Joshua** ends, the book of **Judges** begins. Therefore all these books have been composed out of the writings of **Moses**, **Joshua**, and other records, by one and the same hand, after the beginning of the reign of **Saul**, and before the eighth year of **David**. And **Samuel** was a sacred writer,¹⁸ acquainted with the history of **Moses** and the **Judges**,¹⁹ and had leisure in the reign of **Saul**, and sufficient authority to compose these books. He was a Prophet, and judged **Israel** all the days of his life, and was in the greatest esteem with the people; and the Law by which he was to judge the people was not to be published by less authority than his own, the

¹⁵ Judges 17:6; 18:1; 19:1; 21:25

¹⁶ Judges 1:21

¹⁷ 2 Samuel 5:8 and 1 Chronicles 11:6

¹⁸ 1 Samuel 10:25

¹⁹ 1 Samuel 12:8, 9, 10, 11, 12

Law-maker being not inferior to the judge. And the book of **Jasher**, which is quoted in the book of **Joshua**,²⁰ was in being at the death of **Saul**.²¹

At the dedication of the Temple of **Solomon**, when the Ark was brought into the most holy place, there was nothing in it but the two tables,²² and therefore when the **Philistines** took the Ark, they took out of it the book of the Law, and the golden pot of Manna, and **Aaron's** Rod. And this and other losses in the desolation of **Israel**, by the conquering **Philistines**, might give occasion to **Samuel**, after some respite from those enemies, to recollect the scattered writings of Moses and **Joshua**, and the records of the Patriarchs and Judges, and compose them in the form now extant.

The book of **Ruth** is a history of things done in the days of the **Judges**, and may be looked upon as an addition to the book of the **Judges**, written by the same author, and at the same time. For it was written after the birth of **David**,²³ and not long after, because the history of **Boaz** and **Ruth**, the great grandfather and great grandmother of **David**, and that of their contemporaries, could not well be remembered above two or three generations. And since this book derives the genealogy of **David** from **Boaz** and **Ruth**, and omits **David's** elder brothers and his sons; it was written in honor of **David**, after he was anointed King by **Samuel**, and before he had children in **Hebron**, and by consequence in the reign of **Saul**. It proceeds not to the history of **David**, and therefore seems to have been written presently

²⁰ Joshua 10:13

²¹ 2 Samuel 1:18

²² 1 Kings 8:9

²³ Ruth 4:17, 22

after he was anointed. They judge well therefore who ascribe to **Samuel** the books of **Joshua**, **Judges**, and **Ruth**.

Samuel is also reputed the author of the first book of **Samuel**, till the time of his death. The two books of **Samuel** cite no authors, and therefore seem to be originals. They begin with his genealogy, birth and education, and might be written partly in his life-time by himself, or his disciples the Prophets at **Naioth** in **Ramah**,²⁴ and partly after his death by the same disciples.

The books of the **Kings** cite other authors, as the book of the Acts of **Solomon**, the book of the **Chronicles** of the Kings of **Israel**, and the book of the **Chronicles** of the Kings of **Judah**. The books of the **Chronicles** cite the book of **Samuel** the Seer, the book of **Nathan** the Prophet, and the book of **Gad** the Seer, for the Acts of **David**; the book of **Nathan** the Prophet, the Prophecy **Ahijah** the **Shilonite**, and the visions of **Iddo** the Seer, for the Acts of **Solomon**; the book of **Shemajah** the Prophet and the book of **Iddo** the Seer concerning genealogies, for the Acts of **Rehoboam** and **Abijah**; the book of the Kings of **Judah** and **Israel** for the Acts of **Asa**, **Joash**, **Amaziah**, **Jotham**, **Ahaz**, **Hezekiah**, **Manasseh**, and **Josiah**; the book of **Hanani** the Seer, for the Acts of **Jehosaphat**; and the visions of **Isaiah** for the Acts of **Uzziah** and Hezekiah. These books were therefore collected out of the historical writings of the ancient Seers and Prophets. And because the books of the **Kings** and **Chronicles** quote one another, they were written at one and the same time. And this time was after the return from the **Babylonian**

²⁴ 1 Samuel 19:18, 19, 20

captivity, because they bring down the history of **Judah**, and the genealogies of the Kings of **Judah**, and of the High Priests, to that captivity. The book of **Ezra** was originally a part of the book of the **Chronicles**, and has been divided from it. For it begins with the two last verses of the books of **Chronicles**, and the first book of **Esdras** begins with the two last chapters thereof. **Ezra** was therefore the compiler of the books of **Kings** and **Chronicles**, and brought down the history to his own time. He was a ready Scribe in the Law of God; and for assisting him in this work **Nehemias** founded a library, and

“...gathered together the Acts of the Kings and the Prophets, and of David, and the Epistles of the Kings concerning the holy gifts.”²⁵

By the Acts of **David** I understand here the two books of **Samuel**, or at least the second book. Out of the Acts of the **Kings**, written from time to time by the Prophets, he composed the books of the Kings of **Judah** and **Israel**, the **Chronicles** of the Kings of **Judah**, and the **Chronicles** of the Kings of **Israel**. And in doing this he joined those Acts together, in due order of time, copying the very words of the authors, as is manifest from hence, that the books of the **Kings** and **Chronicles** frequently agree with one another in the words for many sentences together. Where they agree in sense, there they agree in words also.

So the Prophecies of **Isaiah**, written at several times, he has collected into one body. And the like he did for those of **Jeremiah**, and the rest of

²⁵ 2 Maccabees 2:13.

the Prophets, down to the days of the second Temple. The book of **Jonah** is the history of **Jonah** written by another hand. The book of **Daniel** is a collection of papers written at several times. The six last chapters contain Prophecies written at several times by **Daniel** himself; the six first are a collection of historical papers written by others. The fourth chapter is a decree of **Nebuchadnezzar**. The first chapter was written after **Daniel's** death: for the Author saith, that **Daniel** continued to the first year of **Cyrus**; that is, to his first year over the **Persians** and **Medes**, and third year over **Babylon**. And, for the same reason, the fifth and sixth chapters were also written after his death. For they end with these words:

So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian. ²⁶

Yet these words might be added by the collector of the papers, whom I take to be **Ezra**.

The Psalms composed by **Moses**, **David**, and others, seem to have been also collected by **Ezra** into one volume. I reckon him the collector, because in this collection I meet with Psalms as late as the **Babylonian** captivity, but with none later.

After these things **Antiochus Epiphanes** spoiled the Temple, commanded the **Jews** to forsake the Law upon pain of death, and caused the sacred books to be burnt wherever they could be found: and in these troubles the book of the **Chronicles** of the Kings of **Israel** was entirely lost. But upon

²⁶ Daniel 6:28

recovering from this oppression, **Judas Maccabaeus** gathered together all those writings that were to be met with,²⁷ and in reducing them into order, part of the Prophecies of **Isaiah**, or some Prophet, have been added to the end of the Prophecies of **Zechariah**; and the book of **Ezra** has been separated the book of **Chronicles**, and set together in two orders; in one order in the book of **Ezra**, received into the Canon, and in another order in the first book of **Esdras**.

After the **Roman** captivity, the **Jews** for preserving their traditions, put them in writing in their **Talmud**; and for scriptures, agreed upon an Edition, and pointed it, and counted the letters of every sort in every book: and by preserving only this Edition, the antienter various lections, except what can be discovered by means of the **Septuagint** Version, are now lost; and such marginal notes, or other corruptions, as by the errors of the transcribers, before this Edition was made, had crept into the text, are now scarce to be corrected.

The **Jews** before the **Roman** captivity distinguished the sacred books into the Law, the Prophets, and the **Hagiographa**, or holy writings; and read only the Law and the Prophets in their Synagogues. And Christ and his Apostles laid the stress of religion upon the Law and the Prophets.²⁸ By the **Hagiographa** they meant the historical books called **Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah**, and **Esther**, the book of **Job**, the **Psalms**, the books of **Solomon**, and the **Lamentations**. The

²⁷ 2 Maccabees 2:14

²⁸ Matthew 7:12; Matthew 22:40; Luke 16:16, 29, 31; Luke 24:44; Acts 24:14; Acts 26:22; Romans 3:21.

Samaritans read only the **Pentateuch**: and when **Jehosaphat** sent men to teach in the cities, they had with them only the book of the Law; for the Prophecies now extant were not then written. And upon the return from the **Babylonian** captivity, **Ezra** read only the book of the Law to the people, from morning to noon, on the first day of the seventh month; and from day to day in the feast of Tabernacles: for he had not yet collected the writings of the Prophets into the volume now extant; but instituted the reading of them after the collection was made. By reading the Law and the Prophets in the Synagogues, those books have been kept freer from corruption than the **Hagiographa**.

In the infancy of the nation of **Israel**, when God had given them a Law, and made a covenant with them to be their God if they would keep his commandments, he sent Prophets to reclaim them, as often as they revolted to the worship of other gods: and upon their returning to him, they sometimes renewed the covenant which they had broken. These Prophets he continued to send till the days of **Ezra**: but after their Prophecies were read in the Synagogues, those Prophecies were thought sufficient. For if the people would not hear **Moses** and the old Prophets, they would hear no new ones, no not "*though they should rise from the dead.*"²⁹ At length when a new truth was to be preached to the *Gentiles*, namely, **that Jesus was the Christ**, God sent new Prophets and Teachers: but after their writings were also received and read in the Synagogues of the Christians, Prophecy ceased a second time. We have **Moses**, the Prophets, and Apostles, and the words of Christ himself; and if we will not bear

²⁹ Luke 16:31

them, we shall be more inexcusable than the **Jews**. For the Prophets and Apostles have foretold, that as **Israel** often revolted and broke the covenant, and upon repentance renewed it; so there should be a falling away among the Christians, soon after the days of the Apostles; and that in the latter days God would destroy the impenitent revolters, and make a new covenant with his people. And the giving ear to the Prophets is a fundamental character of the true Church. For God has so ordered the Prophecies, that in the latter days,

*“the wise may understand, but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand.”*³⁰

The authority of Emperors, Kings, and Princes is human. The authority of Councils, Synods, Bishops, and Presbyters is human. The authority of the Prophets is divine, and comprehends the sum of religion, reckoning **Moses** and the Apostles among the Prophets; and **“if an Angel from Heaven preach any other gospel,”** than what they have delivered, **“let him be accursed.”**³¹ Their writings contain covenant between God and his people, with instructions for keeping this covenant; instances of God’s judgments upon them that break it: and predictions of things to come. While the people of God keep the covenant they continue to be his people: when they break it they cease to be his people or church, and become *“the Synagogue of Satan, who say they are Jews and are not.”*³² And

³⁰ Daniel 12:9, 10

³¹ Galatians 1:8-9

³² Revelation 3:9

no power on earth is authorized to alter this covenant.

The predictions of things to come relate to the state of the Church in all ages: and amongst the old Prophets, ***Daniel*** is most distinct in order of time, and easiest to be understood: and therefore in those things which relate to the last times, he must be made the key to the rest.