

The Excellencies of the Bible

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"Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of Me." - John 5:39

I. I HAVE sometimes thought that a Nation must be truly BLESSED if it were governed by no other laws than those of that blessed Book (Deut. 4:5-6). It is so complete a system that nothing can be added to it (Deut. 4:2), nor taken from it (Rev. 22:19). It contains everything needful to be known and done (Acts 16:30-31). It affords a copy for a King (Deut. 17:18) and a rule for a Subject (1 Pet. 2:13-14). It gives instruction and counsel to a Senate (Ps. 105:22); authority and direction for a Magistrate (Ezra 7:25-26). It cautions a Witness (Exod. 23:1); requires an impartial verdict of a Jury (Lev. 19:15), and furnishes the Judge with his sentence (Deut. 16:19-20). It defends the rights Of ALL (Exod. 22), and reveals vengeance to every defrauder (1 Thess. 4:6), over-reacher (Isa. 49:26), or oppressor (Eccles. 5:8). It prescribes and limits the sway of the Sovereign (2 Sam. 23:3), the rule of the Ruler (Rom. 13:3-4), and the authority of the Master (Eph. 6:9), commands the Subject to honour (Rom. 13:1), and the Servant to obey (Col. 3:22), and pro-mises the blessing and protection of its Author to all who walk by its rules (Lev. 26:3-12; John 16:23).

II. It sets the Husband as lord of the household (1 Pet. 3:5-7), and the Wife as mistress of the table (Prov. 31:15); tell Him how to rule (Col. 3:19) and HER how to manage (Prov. 31). It entails honour to Parents (Eph. 6:2) and enjoins obedience to Children (Col. 3:20). It gives directions for Weddings (Luke 14:8; John 2:2) and for Burials (Gen. 23:8-9); regulates Feasts (Luke 14:10-15) and Fasts (Isa. 58:6-7), mournings and rejoicings (Rom. 12:15), and orders Labour for the day (Exod. 20:9) and Rest for the night (John 9:4). It promises Food and Raiment (Luke 12:22), and limits the use of both (Rom. 13:13; 1 Pet. 3:3). It points out a faithful and an Eternal GUARDIAN to the departing Husband and Father (Exod. 22:22-24); tells him with whom to leave his, Fatherless Children (Ps. 146:9), and in whom his Widow is to trust (Jer. 49:11), and promises a Father to the former (Ps. 68:5) and a Husband to the latter (Isa. 54:5). It teaches a man how to set his House in order (Isa. 38:1), and how to make his Will (Prov. 13:22). It appoints a dowry for the Wife (Gen. 34:12), entails the right of the first-born (Gen. 48:18), and shews how the younger Branches shall be left (Gen. 49:13).

III. It is the FIRST Book (John 1:1), the BEST Book (Prov. 30:5), and the OLDEST Book in all the world (Gen. 1:1). It contains the Choicest matter (Ps. 12:6), gives the best instruction (Ps. 19:7-11), and affords the Greatest Pleasure and Satis-faction that ever was revealed (Jer. 15:16). It contains the best Laws (Ps. 119:72) and profoundest Mysteries that ever were penned (Rom. 11:33). It brings the best of tidings (Luke 2:10-15), and affords the best of Comfort to the enquiring and disconsolate (1 Tim. 1:15). It exhibits Life and Immortality from everlasting (Rom. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:10), and shews the way to Eternal Glory (Ps. 16:11). It is a brief Recital of all that is PAST (Acts 7), and a certain Prediction of all that is to COME (Rev. 1:19). It settles all matters in debate (Isa. 8:20), resolves all Doubts (Prov. 22:21; Dan. 5:12), and eases the mind and conscience of all their scruples (Isa. 55:1; Matt. 11:28). It reveals the Only Living and true GOD (Exod. 34:6-7), and shews the way to Him (John 14:6); it sets aside ALL OTHER gods (Acts 4:12), and describes the Vanity of them (Isa. 44:9-20), and of all that trust in them (Ps. 97:7).

In short, it is a Book of LAW, to show right (Ps. 19:8; 119:128) and wrong (1 Cor. 1:19-27).

A Book Of WISDOM, that condemns all folly (Eccles. 7:25) and makes the foolish wise (Ps. 19:7; 1 Cor. 1:72).

A Book of TRUTH (John 17:17), that detects all lies (1 John 2:4, 22) and confutes all errors (Gal. 1:8).

And a Book of LIFE (Rev. 20:12), that giveth life (John 5:24), and shows the Way from everlasting death (1 Thess. 1:10).

IV. It is the most Compendious Book in all the world (Heb. 4:12), the most ancient (Heb. 11:3), authentic (2 Pet. 1:21). and the most entertaining history that ever was published (Ps. 105). It contains the most ancient Antiquities (Gen. 11:4), strange Events (Ps. 78), wonderful Occurrences (Acts 5:15; 19:12), heroic Deeds (1 Sam. 17:49), and unparalleled Wars (Judges 7:19-20). It describes the Celestial (Job 38:31-33), Terrestrial (Gen. 1), and Infernal worlds (Rev. 19:20); and the origin of the Angelic myriads (Heb. 1:7), Human tribes (Gen. 9:19), and Devilish legions (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:7).

V. It will instruct the most accomplished Mechanic (1 Kings 6:7) and the profoundest Artist (Ps. 139:15-16); it will teach the best Rhetorician (Exod. 4:12), and exercise every power of the most skilful Arithmetician (Rev. 13:18); puzzle the wisest Anatomist (Eccles. 11:5), and exercise the nicest Critic (Matt. 7:4-5). It corrects the vain Philosopher (Col. 2:8; Job 38), and confutes the wise Astronomer (Job. 22:12); it exposes the subtle Sophist (1 Cor. 3:19), and makes Diviners mad (Isa. 44:25). It is a complete Code of Laws (Ex. 22), a perfect Body of Divinity (Rom. 8), an unequalled narrative (John 21:25), a book of Lives (Heb. 11), a book of Travels (Num. 33), and a book of Voyages (Jonah 1; Acts 27).

VI. It is the best COVENANT that ever was agreed on (Jer. 32:40), the best DEED that ever was sealed (Isa. 8:16), the best EVIDENCE that ever was published (John 5:39), the best WILL that ever was made (John 14:27), and the b-'St TESTAMENT that ever was signed (Heb. 9:15). To understand it is to be Wise indeed (Prov. 2:6-7); to be ignorant of it is to be Destitute of wisdom (1 Cor. 2:14).

VII. It is the King's best copy (1 Kings 9:4), the Magistrate's best RULE (Rom. 13:1-8), the Housewife's best GUIDE (Prov. 31), the Servant's best DIRECTORY (Eph. 6:5-8), and the Young Man's best COMPANION (PS. 119:9). It is the School-boy's SPELLING-BOOK (2 Tim. 1:5), and the Learned Man's MASTERPIECE (1 Cor. 2:6-7). It contains a choice GRAMMAR for a novice (Matt. 21:16) and profound MYSTERY for a sage (Job 40:4). It is the ignorant man's DICTIONARY (Isa. 35:8), and the wise man's DIRECTORY (Job 28:12-28). It affords knowledge of witty inventions (Prov. 8:12), and dark Sayings for the GRAVE (Prov. 1:6); and is ITS OWN INTERPRETER (Gen. 40:8; 1 Cor. 2:13).

VIII. It is Little Faith's choice Breast (Isa. 66:11 ; 1 Pet. 2:2), and the strong man's substantial Dish (Heb. 5:14). It is the Lady's best LOOKING-GLASS (2 Cor. 3:18), in which she may see both her heart and her face (Jas. 1:23-25), and the face and heart of everybody else (Ps. 14:2, 3; Rom. 3:12). It is an exact BALANCE (Prov. 16:11), in which a man may weigh both his spirit and his actions (Job 31:6), and tell the exact weight of himself (Ps. 22:6; 1 Pet. 1:24) and of all Mankind (Ps. 62:9; Eccles. 1:13-14; Jer. 17:9-10). It is the Astro-nomer's best TELESCOPE (1 Con 13:12), in which he may see the Sun (Mal. 4:2), Moon (Can. 6:10), and seven Stars (Rev.

2:1), and an awful Eclipse of the damned (Matt. 25:30); and it reveals a World of which no Geographer could ever give a map (Rev. 22:2); and a way to it which no lion hath ever trod (Isa. 35:9), and which the Vulture's eye hath never seen (Job. 28:7).

IX. It promises ---FREEDOM INDEED " to all who embrace its truths (John 8:32-36); Freedom from the reign of sin (Rom. 6:14), of Satan (Acts 26:18), and of death (Rom. 6:9); and except a man receive the TRUTH, the real TRUTH (John 16:13), and that IN THE LOVE OF IT (2 Thess. 2:10), he never shall be able to govern himself (Prov. 16:32), or to bridle his Temper (Col. 3:12-13), his Passions (Rom. 6:12-13), his Tongue (Ps. 39:1; 141:3), or his Sin (Ps. 119:133).

X. It encourages the Wise (Prov. 2; 16:16), the Warrior (1 Tim. 6:12), the Swift (Heb. 12:1), and the Overcomer (Rev. 3:5), and promises an eternal reward to the Excellent (Matt. 25:21), the Conqueror (2 Tim. 4:7-8), the Winner (1 Cor. 9:24), and the Prevalent (Matt. 24:13). And that which crowns all is, that THE AUTHOR is without Partiality (Acts 10:34), and without Hypocrisy (Jas. 3:17); IN WHOM IS NO VARIABLENESS (Mal. 3:6), NOR SHADOW OF TURNING (Jas. 1:17).