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The Holy History of Mankind

By a Young Disciple of Spinoza

And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Revelation [22:19]

Stuttgart  
Hallberg's Bookstore  
1837

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*To all God-fearing governments*

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# Part One

## *The Past as the Foundation of what would happen*

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The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.  
2 CORINTHIANS 3:6

### CHAPTER ONE

#### The First Main Period of the Holy History – or the History of Revelation of God, the Father

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that  
they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made  
themselves aprons. GENESIS 3:7

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord.  
DEUTERONOMY 6:4

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First Period: India. From Adam to the Deluge

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.      Genesis 5:1

(1)

Adam was the last and most noble product of the earth after it stopped bearing fruit. And the fruit which it brought forth into the world multiplied and became ever more noble, each according to its own art. But Adam was the kernel of the spirit, which would reach its perfection in his descendants. His soul was whole; he lived in the Eden of his innocence and bliss. But the time arrived when he felt a discord within himself, as ill-balanced passions arose in him, which put him in conflict with his own self and exiled him from his Eden. So began the apex and the glory of his life, after which he faced his death. This, however, was caused by love, which pushed him to seek his spouse. Because man is only half a life, and his spirit is unfulfilled until he is again united with the woman, which was in the beginning one with him, but later appeared separated from him. So when the two spouses found each other, they loved each other. But in this Adam has not yet recognized the value of life, since he lived without consciousness and without guilt. Only when he painfully felt the absence of his life companion, the division in his innermost self, did he strive relentlessly after his lost bliss and finally recognized his life in the woman.

This was the beginning of the knowledge of God, who is life. This was the time when God revealed himself to man for the first time, after having enjoyed the tree of knowledge. Because when Adam tasted the fruit which was forbidden to him, he saw more than all the creatures which had preceded him, and deeper than all those who lived with him, as he was the unity and the centre of all and was now conscious of himself. Because when Adam knew his wife, the seed of a new human being was created in his inner self as well as in the external [world]. And this seed grew internally, and tore the womb, and the mother gave birth in pain: but the fruit comforted her for her pain. Later it came to pass that the mortal garment of the first human couple, after it had borne its fruit and achieved the knowledge of God to which it was destined, followed the laws of time by a revolution of nature and returned to [the dust] from which it had been created. The children of Adam soon split apart, and then got

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reunited. But by and large the first human beings lived a life of unity, because they were all still free and equal; therefore they were good and happy and loved each other, and shared joy with the joyful and mourned with the mournful.

(2)

As they multiplied, and their desires grew with their imagination, their unity was transformed into strife, their love into longing and their innocence was lost. Finally, the young species of the Adamites was corrupted by the vices of the old world, whose depravity was enormous. This came to pass when the Adamites began to increase in the land, and daughters were born to them, and men of violence saw the daughters of Adam and how charming they were, and took wives from among them according to their will and fancy. And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be a hundred and twenty years. The Nephilim [= giants] were on earth in those days; and also after that, when the men of violence came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, [and] the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown (Genesis 6:1–4).<sup>1</sup> This is how it appeared at a time which was corrupted and deadened in its soul. The corruption of the old world became steadily greater, and it proceeded towards its dissolution. In its womb it carried already the seed of a new [world]; because those of the Adamites were saved, who enjoyed God's grace.

**Second Period: Assyria. From Noah to Abraham**

These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. Genesis 6:9

<sup>1</sup> Hess does indeed follow here the language of Genesis 6:1–4, yet calls 'men of violence' what the biblical text refers to as 'the sons of God'. This is a surprising deviation from what appears to be an unambiguous text, and the only source that could be found for this reading is in the Aramaic Onkolos translation of the Bible, which substitutes 'sons of arrogance' for the original Hebrew 'sons of God'. Hess must have been aware of this gloss, as the Aramaic translation of the Bible was usually taught in the sort of religious Jewish school (*heder*) which Hess attended as a boy.

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(3)

And when the appointed time of the old world approached, there occurred the last natural revolution on earth. It appeared as if the deep had broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened, and the deluge stormed in. Thus the old corrupt world went to its grave. But the most excellent of those, who emerged wholesome and cleansed from the deluge and the corruption, was called Noah. He was the man of his age, and in him, just as in his ancestor Adam, the Eternal, who is Life, revealed himself again. And [Noah] saw like him, more than his ancestors and deeper than his contemporaries, because the spirit was [again] united in him. And it was revealed to him that the human race, despite its sinfulness, will never be completely destroyed. Because that is how it is with fleeting life – that while it carries within itself, from its very youth, the seeds of its own corruption, namely its inner strife and death, it also bears within itself the seeds of rejuvenated life through God's eternal grace. Also, a number of laws were revealed to [Noah], which related to the life of society.<sup>2</sup>

(4)

Noah died, and men multiplied once more and were spread over the land. Until then they still had the same language and the same images. Since the tools of language were given to them, they designated the images encountered by them by tones or sounds, and thus language was formed. But the images which they recognized increased from generation to generation. So it came about that as men and their representations multiplied, their language became confused. Because some held these, the others different images or representations, towards which their spirit was inclined; therefore men split apart, despite the external unifying aspects, and each worshipped his own idol.

This was the second affliction of the old world, when men separated themselves from each other and established different associations, tribes, nations, and empires, in which people buried their freedom by giving up

<sup>2</sup> This is an opaque yet clear reference to the biblical story of the Covenant (Genesis 9:1–17) in which the survivors of the Deluge take upon themselves the so-called Seven Commandments of the Sons of Noah, which deal mainly with prevention of murder and spilling of blood, and in return God sets up the rainbow as a symbol of his commitment not to destroy the human race. In the Judaic tradition this Noahite Covenant, which is universal and encompasses all of humanity, precedes the later, particular Covenant with Abraham and his descendants.

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their equality. The right of property appeared; external inequality followed soon, preceded by the inner, spiritual one. Because with the right of property, the historical or inheritance right had soon to be established; however, with this the door and gate were opened to contingency and arbitrariness, to superstition and blind obedience, to injustice and slavery – because now the achievement of ancestors was passed on to their undeserving descendants.

But in the midst of this great confusion of languages and nations there emerged once again, through the eternal law of time, a man in whose spirit the different images or representations of his contemporaries were brought together. And he saw again, like his great ancestors, more than his [immediate] predecessors, deeper than his contemporaries. For he once again recognized the One who is Life, and honoured Him in spirit and truth.

**Third Period: Egypt. From Abraham to Moses**

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee.<sup>3</sup>

Genesis 12:1

(5)

For the third time the Godhead has revealed itself to a chosen one, known by the name Abraham. Him God had set apart from the great mass of idol-worshippers and slaves, and chose him to be the ancestor and chief of a nation, through which the knowledge of God would spread across the world; so that through him the seed of the recognition, which was sown with Adam, would grow into a root out of which the stem, the crown, and the fruit would emerge. But just as in the life of nature, the earlier, lower organisms continue to live next to the later and higher ones, so in the life of mankind, in history, the spirit of earlier, lower stages continues to exist next to the later and higher ones, and thus gives testimony until this very day to the undeniable laws of nature and human history. Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, called Israel. Initially, this family lived together and subjected itself to the eternal law of life and trusted in divine Providence.

<sup>3</sup> I have retained the language of the Authorized Version ('a land'), though the Hebrew original says 'the land' (*ha-aretz*), as does the German Luther translation quoted by Hess (*dem Lande*).

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(6)

But as they began to multiply, a conflict arose among the brothers, the sons of Israel. And Joseph, the noblest son, parted from his family, and became the germ of the Egyptian bondage, because he came to Egypt, became great and respected in the land, and brought his family, with which he became reconciled, to him. And the children of Israel kept their traditional customs, lived apart, were engaged in cattle-breeding, and were initially happy in the country. But as they multiplied and became so numerous that they filled the land, a new ruler emerged in Egypt, for whom the great Joseph was a stranger, and he said to his people: 'Behold, the children of Israel can multiply so much, that they may become a danger for us: for if a war break out, they can join our enemies and leave the country.' (Because the children of Israel were shepherds and nomads and were not bound in any way to the Egyptians, who as peasants even viewed the life of shepherds as an abomination.) 'So let us deal with them cunningly', the king continued, 'so that they will not elude us.'<sup>4</sup> From this time on, the children of Israel were treated as slaves. But as the pressure on the people reached its height, a son was born to Amram,<sup>5</sup> and he was saved from death and slavery.

Fourth Period: Palestine – Phoenicia. From Moses to David

They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. Exodus 32:8

(7)

Moses, the son of Amram, so called because of his miraculous rescue, was educated in the Pharaonic court. Later he had to flee the land, because out of noble anger at the oppression of his brethren he killed, in a rash moment, an Egyptian oppressor. After this he tended the flock of his father-in-law Jethro in Midian, to which he had fled. And he led the flock to the plains of Horeb, where a large face shone at him out of a bush. It appeared as if

<sup>4</sup> This is a paraphrase of Exodus 1:9–10.

<sup>5</sup> Hess mistakenly writes 'Amron'.



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the bush was ablaze in a bright fire, but it was not consumed by the flames. Then the Lord's voice called to him out of the flame, and when he heard the divine call 'Moses! Moses!', he answered: 'Here am I!' [Exodus 3:4] . . . Soon, however, timidity overcame Moses, and he began to despair of his divine vocation. Yet once he recognized the miracles of the Lord in history, as well as in nature, he trusted in the God of his fathers and proclaimed him among his brethren. In the beginning they did not hearken to Moses' words because of too much pettiness and hard oppression. Later, however, they trusted the God of their fathers and followed with awe the inscrutable ways of the eternal Providence. So many signs and miracles took place favourable to the people [of Israel], that its oppressors were filled with fear and trembling. Even the court scholars and magicians, who at first explained everything away and knew how to imitate it, had ultimately to admit that God's finger was visible here. At every plague which overcame the land because of the stiffneckedness of Pharaoh and his servants, the freedom, demanded by the people, was promised to it. Yet once the plague was over, the tyrants broke their word and perjured themselves; until they saw their own destruction before their eyes, and then they could not get rid of the people quickly enough.

The people thus received the Law of God through Moses at Mount Sinai. After that it still wandered for a whole generation in the desert, survived some wars, and suffered many privations until it became ripe to enter the Promised Land, where the revealed word of the fathers was to be fulfilled. But [there it was also to encounter] what Moses, the divine man, prophesied would happen to it if it became unfaithful to the Law – the loss of its unity and equality.

## (8)

Moses was not allowed to lead the liberated people into the Promised Land, because due to its roughness and sinfulness [the people] expressed too much mistrust towards him. Because even during the granting of the Law there occurred the scandalous story of the Golden Calf, in which the mortal moment of time revealed itself. This was the inclination towards idol-worship, which continued until the Middle Ages (as will be shown later). The Israelites also showed themselves often as disgruntled and stubborn. Therefore Moses sometimes became sidetracked in his divine work and lost trust and willpower. 'Oh', he once sighed to heaven, 'Have I carried this people under my heart, have I begotten them? Why, Oh Lord,

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am I called to carry this nation as a mother carries her infant into the land promised to their fathers?’<sup>6</sup> ‘Blot me’, he called in despair to God on another occasion, ‘blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book (of history) which thou hast written!’ [Exodus 32:32]. Therefore in the end he had to give up the completion of his great work. He entrusted his office to the loyal Joshua, who grew under his own eyes and was full of the Holy Spirit. This loyal servant of God led the people into the land which Moses was only allowed to see from afar. Fear walked before him, for the inhabitants of the land had heard all that was told about the chosen people. And Jericho, the first fortress, fell under the sound of the trumpets, which Joshua caused to blow according to a divine command. And the people spread its conquests and fought victoriously so long as Joshua and the first judges were alive. Later, however, it split, and fell into sinfulness and bondage. The great pain of the times became evident. Still, from time to time a saviour emerged from the people, who delivered his brethren from sin and bondage as promised by Moses. But at the time when Samuel judged the people, it asked for a visible king and spoke to the father of the prophets: ‘Give us a king like the people who surround us’.<sup>7</sup> Because the people became numerous, felt insecure, and believed that its situation would become better under a king, who will once again unite them under his sceptre. This demand has been anticipated in the Law; and Samuel chose, according to the regulations, a man of the people, called Saul. But he then took away the crown from his head when he, the king, became unfaithful to the Law. And he put it on the head of David, the son of Jesse, who already under Saul’s reign commanded Israel’s hosts.

### Fifth Period: Babylonia – Persia. From David to the Exile

And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply . . . and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

Deuteronomy 8:13–14

<sup>6</sup> This is a paraphrase of Numbers 11:12. The biblical text, however, evokes the image of a nurturing father, not mother: ‘Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the suckling child, unto the land which thou swearest unto their fathers?’

<sup>7</sup> Again, this is a paraphrase, and not an exact quote, of I Samuel 8:5: ‘Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations.’