

THE REVELATION OF GOD

A DISCUSSION OF THE BIBLE IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN CRITICISM

To the most casual observer much discussion gathered at the present time about the book we call the Bible. The question involved is not concerning the fact and reality of a revelation from God, so much as the manner of it, and the way we have been in the habit of looking at it.

If we should regard the Bible simply as a heterogeneous mass of history, geography, genealogy, statistics, liturgy, poetry, prophecies, sermons, prayers, allegories, stories, parables, letters, and mystical utterances, along with a lot of temple rites, idol worship, the tiresome purification of the Mosaic law, the disputes of the Jews, the eating of meats once offered to Moab, all matters as dead as the men who wrote about them, we might ask what have we to do with such a budget of obsolete questions, belonging to a long line of vanished life? But that would hardly be a proper view to take of it. It may be well in the beginning to determine if we may what the Bible is not. It is not a perfect exposition of God. It does not make any such claim for itself, and nothing can be gained by claiming too much for even the Bible. Nor does the Bible contain many things necessary for the best development of man in this life, though it is an old and common opinion that it contains in so many words, or by plain inference, all that is necessary for mankind to know in any and all emergencies. But we must admit that there are some things we have learned about God, even, that we did not find specifically in the Bible. The Bible was never meant to be a Thesaurus of universal knowledge, and there are a thousand findings out to be made by the use of common sense, investigation and experience.

Let it be remembered also that our own claims for the Bible are so tremendous that it is not irrelevant to apply every test that intellect and conscience can bring to bear upon it. Nothing is so ruthless to the Bible as an evasion of the fullest investigation. There is no use so reverent as a hold use of it, and if it cannot stand the tests applied to other researches after truth, we are begging the question. Nor do I mean by this that every element of perplexity must be eliminated from the Bible. All great things are not simple. And while this is true, the Bible should not be considered wholly a supernatural book, and much of the discussion now going on comes of regarding the Bible as a sort of miracle throughout, whereas, revelation is a growth, an unfolding like history, and evolves with the progress of the race. In proof of this, it may be stated that the Bible possesses a certain elasticity of interpretation; if it did not it would long since have been as dead as Ezekiel's priests.

Our Modern Belief. Nobody now believes, for instance, that infants go to hell, nor do instructed believers longer think the great majority of the human race go to hell—not more perhaps than the inmates of a city jail compared to the population outside. We no longer believe that a man inherits eternal life without regard to character. We do not hold either that a man is wholly unable to do right if he really wants to do so. We do not now believe if a few iniquitous Christians ever did, that saints in Heaven are happier by the sight of the lost in hell. We do not now believe that God becomes angry. We no longer believe there can be nothing good or beautiful in unconverted young people. We do not now believe that the Almighty is ignorant of the laws of heredity, or that he overlooks the presence of circumstances over which we can have no control and which have so much to do in forming character. We cannot believe that he ever created a deathless soul, the least, the lowest, the most denied, the most beated by life, and pushed it aside, as unworthy his personal consideration and tenderness. We do not believe that he does not love poor human wretches better than we do. We do not believe but that thou-

sands of people in our day are better Christians than David and Solomon ever were. Instead of tarrying with these things, which good men once extracted from the Bible, or thought they did, we now ask, "Have you a pure heart; explain your relation with the people living on the lot next to you. Are you loved at home? Do you talk scandal? Is your imagination pure? Are you unselfish? Are you really kind to the poor, and do you try to help them? Can you give disagreeable service to the sick? How do you bear up when the tables turn on you? Do you believe in the man who has done wrong? Do you believe in the fallen, the weak and the defenseless? Is your heart such that the wrong-doer would voluntarily come to you to confess revealing everything in his life, and while you listen to his sad story you answer, "I know, I know," amid sympathy and tears? And all this because the Bible betrays elasticity of thought and standards of Christian life.

The Revelation. But let us return to the best point from which to consider the Bible, and how it reveals God. It is on this wise: God is in the midst of a great revealing period which has been going on through all the ages, bringing forth from the earth beneath, from the stary heavens above us, from the generations gone, from governments, from climates, industries, families, from nations and tribes, from individuals, high and low, from emergent and declining, from the dawn of the process of revelation, unrelenting and evolving to all who would see it a knowledge of himself, a revelation never so poor as at the beginning, and never so rich as in our day.

Of this great revealing movement, the Bible is the product, the record, the thermometer, the flower, the interpretation of which lies not so much in itself as outside of itself, taking as a working basis the fact that nothing can be a revelation from God which contradicts the evident principles of the laws of reason, or the evident facts and laws of the universe; for the universe is, after all, the truest expression of God's thought, of his wisdom and love, and as such it is the most indisputable revelation of God, more trustworthy than any magical or abnormal manifestation, which the human mind, in the exercise of its rational faculties, can neither take in nor interpret.

Persons sometimes imagine that if God had revealed himself continuously and to all men, by working miracles every day before them, it would be impossible to doubt him. But if miracles were as common as Oregon showers, they would soon attract no more attention than they. For instance, one of the most remarkable things in the Bible is Ezekiel's vision of a cloud coming out of the north, with whirlwind and with infolding fire and flashing lightning; and from its amber brightness a crystal firmament evolved, borne on four cherubim, with wheels of beryl, so high that they were dreadful, and all moving with flashing light. On all this was a sapphire throne, and on the throne the appearance of a man. The imagination could hardly conceive a more striking sight than this. Suppose, now, that a vision should rise on our view every morning from the north, how long would it continue to impress us, and wherein would it reveal God any more than the rising of the sun every morning in the east, or the heavens filled with sparkling stars, thousands of them, every night? What panegyric, let me ask, could be imagined that would reveal God more than the increasing disclosures of science in the physical universe around us? Oh, yes, you say, but we want a plain revelation in words; and so we have it in the Bible. But what would this revelation

in words amount to without first a knowledge of the revealer from other sources than words? Even a mother's words to her own child cannot reveal her love for it till she has revealed herself in the actions of a mother's love. And so God's revelation of himself in the Bible is supplemental to the revelation of himself in the universe.

Shall we, as rational beings, contend that a revelation of God only is per se excellent which comes through the extraordinary, the special and the miraculous? Paul says: "The invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity." That is, we see what God is in nature, in his universe, which is not an inflexible quantity and product, like a casting which any change or enlargement would burst or break, but growing, plastic and progressive. But there is not after all, so much of the mystical and miraculous in the Bible as we are accustomed to think. For God reveals himself to us as one man reveals himself to another man. The American Revolution revealed a Washington, and the Civil War a Lincoln. So the universe and the sacred record we have of it reveals God, in much the same way.

Artistic reasons, exegetical and historical, unite in recommending the conception of revelation herein stated. It now remains to see how it applies.

Inspiration and Inerrancy. It was formerly supposed that everything in the Bible is as perfect and complete as its divine author. Infallibility and inerrancy were, therefore, a necessity, and the thought of any error in it was equivalent to abandoning the book altogether. Everything was considered perfect, language and all, dictated in every particular by the pure mind of God. To such, the notion of a revelation through history, through the struggles and moral life of the race and the insight of godly men, is not in order. They have little patience with those who even dare ask where all this written volume comes from, anyway. They think it shows impertinence, if not downright infidelity, to ask such questions.

But there are those, modest and sincere, who incline to the opinion that inspiration does not mean that every word in the book was dictated by the infallible intelligence.

It is the most natural thing in the world to conceive the complete inerrancy of the Bible, and to most persons the divine origin implies this. Without it they think we should all be at sea, and we should be as well off with no revelation at all. We should, however, be careful how we press such reasoning as this, lest all faith be overthrown. To make myself understood, let me ask the reader to give a satisfactory account of the manuscripts from which we have our Scriptures. The best and all that can be done is to talk vaguely of some ancient or first manuscripts, which long ago vanished beyond the hope of recovery, and what gain, I ask, is there from this kind of vanished infallibility? The predicament most ministers find themselves in is, they consider themselves bound to maintain infallibility of the Scriptures by finding a revelation in every detail of it, and if asked for a justification of their position they go off into a meaningless effusion about authorship, dates, decisions of councils, and so on.

Revelation a Process. It is not better to say that revelation consists of a great process of which the Bible is the historical and literary record and product, dependent, not on some critical infallibility of the textual record and its unquestioned preservation of the identical text as it came from the hands of original authors, which I may as well say here and now cannot be maintained in the presence of intelligent criticism. The truth is, God has been at work a long time and he had a church in the world long before there was any Bible at all, and the time has come when we must consider the Bible as the summary and his-

tory, the legitimate outcome of his dealings with men. This is the true and only Christian faith in the matter.

Adherence to a lot of little critical dictations and the much exploited Greek "breathings" of the original text, upon which shall depend the only true revelation of God, is no longer tenable. With the general intelligence and scholarship of the present day, to say this must be done would be like putting a chick after it had been hatched back into the shell. How shall we, for instance, go about holding to the very numerous Scripture texts which teach divine decrees, a doctrine once very generally believed, but which the intelligence of mankind now repudiates. Notwithstanding the fact that a hat full of proof texts unequivocal, may be produced in favor of it, the sound sense of men now says: "It isn't like God, and it cannot, therefore, be true." For this reason the Presbyterian church recently modified the statement of it in its Confession of Faith. So this sticking to the literal text is not so common after all. "He that believeth on me out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters," or, "Thou art Peter, and on this rock will I build my church." Are these, and scores of texts like them, to be taken literally? Certainly not. What then? Why, simply this: Many very many texts of Scripture are to different readers what the readers are in themselves, what their antecedents and predilections make them, along with the fact that we usually come out of the Bible with those texts sticking to us which our idiosyncrasies attract. And this is the reason why a man who happens to get a twist on sanctification, the second coming of Christ, baptism by immersion, or the supremacy of St. Peter, is heard every time he gets the chance howling his hobby, like the old Kentucky foxhound when he struck the trail.

Is it not safer and far more rational, to stand on the broader platform of general insight as to the mind and character of God, what he is as we see him manifest in the universe, in the rational nature, in his providences and in human consciousness? "These dealers in proof texts have done me much evil," is what the good book would say if it could speak audibly. For there has hardly been a step in the progress of the race in modern times which has not been regarded as fatal to the claims of the Bible on this technical, or proof-text basis. Texts have been arrayed against astronomy, geology, political economy, philosophy, geography, religious toleration, anti-slavery, medicine, vaccination, anesthetics, fanning mills, lightning rods, life insurance, organs in church, and women speaking in church. All these, says Professor Brown, of Boston Theological School, have been declared to make the word of God of no effect.

Interpret the Bible by Literary Methods. In conclusion, let me conclude that a plea is herein made for a system of revelation which displaces God by setting up a system purely mechanical and self-administrative; upon the other hand, the method advocated is for a personal, imminent, self-revealing God everywhere. We have long enough taken the Bible to be merely or mainly a book of absolute dogma, a sort of criminal code. It is time, high time, to regard it as a great body of divine literature which should be interpreted by universal literary methods; then we shall not be worrying over interpolations and disputed authorship. Moreover, it is a pity, but we could have a great clarification of metaphor in the Bible, for many, as they now read, are of an ancient form of speech, unimpressive and positively distasteful; but being a revelation to immature men, they were adapted to their immaturity and share in their imperfections. Because of this, much in the Bible is drifting away as obsolete, like the songs of Solomon, which are seldom read by ministers in the public congregation.

It may be added that the views herein set forth are not heretical, but are making progress against not a little opposition from good men, because the average theological man considers any departure from the customary as wrong and disastrous. Nevertheless, there is a wholesome growth in Christian thought, particularly in the faculties of our theological schools, who are coming more and more to a realization that Christ is the end of the law, and with this conception the old mechanical and artificial views of salvation are giving place to a better appreciation of what God is and what he is doing. C. E. CLINE.

CHASED A WOULD-BEMAYOR Porto Rico Black Republicans Gave Candidate Opportunity to "Run."

New York Sun. Late in October the cable told briefly of a demonstration made by a Porto Rican mob against Dooley, Federal candidate for Mayor of San Juan. This was Henry W. Dooley, a former Brooklyn man. Mr. Dooley, who was overwhelmingly beaten on election day, landed here Tuesday from the steamship Philadelphia, and is at his mother's home, 68 Tenth street, Brooklyn. That night he told about his experience with the mob.

Mr. Dooley went to San Juan after the war as the resident partner of the New York commission firm of Dooley, Smith & Co. Last May the City of San Juan borrowed \$300,000 and Governor Hunt, Mr. Dooley saw last night, appointed him as the first American member of the San Juan City Council in order to safeguard the expenditure of the money. Mr. Dooley investigated and found gross irregularities, he says. He fought extravagant expenditures in the Council and his record as a fighter got him the Mayoralty nomination.

"I secured positive proof," said Mr. Dooley last night, "that an aqueduct official had been keeping two sets of books and that a sum ranging from \$20,000 to \$45,000 had been misappropriated in two years. I also discovered that some \$30,000 of the bond issue had been misappropriated by using it for running expenses of the city government."

"With this proof in hand I asked for a special meeting of the Council to order an investigation. This request was at first denied. Finally, however, the secretary of Porto Rico ordered the inquiry. "It was in the fog end of the Mayoralty campaign and the meeting hall was packed to its utmost capacity. Before I had a chance to introduce my resolution, Senator Noy, a negro and a Republican member of the Council, got up and made charges against me, which, I need not say, have never been substantiated. He introduced a resolution, declaring that, inasmuch as my firm had defrauded the city for three years, I was not a proper person to investigate anything. The resolution provided that I be investigated myself, and it was passed with a whoop. Then I presented my resolution, and it was tabled. Finally they passed a mild resolution along somewhat the same lines as mine, but leaving the investigating power in the hands of the Republican faction completely.

"Leaving the hall, I, with a few friends, strolled down into the plaza to wait for a trolley car to my home which is at Santurce, a suburb. I was followed by a howling mob of 300 to 500 people, largely blacks and the scum of the city. They brandished clubs, used all sorts of vile language and every mother's son of 'em was equipped with a tin whistle which he, been dealt out to them that afternoon in advance by one of their leaders. The whistling was something fearful. Seems to me I can hear it yet!

"Interspersed with the shrieking of the whistles were cries such as: "¡Abajo con Dooley!" "¡Al diablo con Dooley!" "I had to wait half an hour for a car and the mob danced and howled about me. I was guarded by four detectives from the Treasury Department, four personal friends and two fellow Federal Councilmen. "When the car finally arrived I got aboard and then with my bodyguard in-



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crased to it, I was whirled to my home. On the car with me were, in addition to those I have mentioned, four Federal party leaders, and 10 policemen. The mob followed to the outskirts of the city, jumping on the car and yanking the trolley pole off when they could.

"The rest of the campaign I had constantly a guard of two policemen. A number of anonymous letters were sent to me, threatening me with assassination. "Yes," said Mr. Dooley in concluding his narrative, "I had a strenuous campaign."

A 15-YEAR-OLD HEROINE.

Elizabeth McCourt Risked Her Life to Stop a Runaway Horse.

New York Sun. Fifteen-year-old Elizabeth McCourt, who works all day for a New York dressmaker and goes every evening to the night school in public school 59, in East Fifty-seventh street, stopped a runaway horse Tuesday night from getting into the mouth of the New York Central's Park-avenue tunnel.

Elizabeth was going through Fifth street on her way home from work at 7 o'clock, when, as she reached Park avenue, she saw a big bay horse racing down the east side of the avenue, dragging an undertaker's wagon after him. There was no driver on the seat. The girl saw that the big iron gate in the Express Company's yards at the very mouth of the tunnel was wide open and that the gateman wasn't in sight. She said later that the first thing she thought of was "the passengers on the trains might be killed if that horse got in there and threw the engines off the track."

There was nobody else around to stop the runaway, so Elizabeth ran into the street, seized the horse's bridle as he came by and clung on for dear life. She didn't have any long skirts to hamper her, and she did have a pair of strong arms and a stout heart.

By swinging on one side she managed to pull the big bay over toward the right hand side of the narrow, cobble-paved lane, and when the horse reached the yard he either had to bump against the iron fence at the side or stop of his own accord. He stopped.

Just at that moment old Thomas Morris, the gateman, came out. He was just in time to see the last of the runaway. "Will you please tie up this horse for a moment," said Elizabeth. "He ran away and I shouldn't wonder if the poor driver is somewhere up the avenue with his head all cut up." Morris tied the horse up to the fence and Elizabeth tramped up Park avenue a

dozen blocks to find the driver. She didn't find him; so she went to the East Fifty-first police station, where Captain Lantry and Sergeant Bingham were behind the desk.

"I just stopped a runaway," she began. "The driver you did," said Lantry and the sergeant.

"Yes, I did," said Elizabeth, "and I don't know where his driver is. I guess you'd better take charge of the horse, hadn't you?"

Policeman Ray went with Elizabeth to the Central's gate. There they found J. A. Thomas, the owner of the rig. Elizabeth ate her dinner in a hurry and then went to the night school. The reporters found her there in the middle of her recitation in geography.

Seeing by Wire in Paris.

The London Express. A new discovery of apparently remarkable value has been submitted to the French Academy of Sciences. It relates to the possibility of seeing the reflection of persons to whom one is talking through the telephone.

It is not possible, says the secretary of the academy, to pronounce upon the real value of the discovery at this early stage, but it has been submitted to the examination of a technical committee. The information publicly given on the subject is that a fresh contribution on the solution of the problem of vision through obstacles has been submitted to the academy by an inventor, whose name would only be made known after the report of the committee on the practicability of the invention.

The inventor proposes to solve the problem by means of electricity, and suggests the utilization of the known electrical response of selenium to the action of light. It may be mentioned that it is known that several persons are working at the solution of this problem of vision through the telephone.

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