

Revelation and Bible

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CHRISTIAN Revelation is really Redemption. It is not showing something, nor telling something, but doing something, and something very decisive. It is not truth about God, it is God coming as His own truth. It is truth in the form of life, God's life, God's action. And what kind of action? It is not God parting the curtains, looking out, and permitting Himself to be seen in a *tableau vivant*. It is not God manifesting Himself as the spiritual or the moral ideal, writing Himself large to our sight, as if He were some vast and glorious constellation high in our soul's heaven. As even Jonathan Edwards said, the revealed glory of God does not consist in the exhibition of His attributes but in the diffusion of His fulness. What we need is power to be and do what we know. We know much more than we can realise. Of course we do speak of the great impressions or discoveries in man

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or nature as revelations, but that is using the word in a secondary sense. Revelation is really a religious word. It is not God standing in front of man, but God casting Himself into the heart of man. It is God giving Himself to man, pouring Himself into human history, sacrificing Himself for human recovery. And since sin can only see God by being saved from guilt, therefore revelation can only come home as redemption. The unholy must be redeemed into the power of seeing the holy, and the holy must so come. Therefore revelation is God as poignant as the cross, as deep as death, as active as evil, as intimate as the Spirit, as final and permanent as our salvation. It is God not only made flesh, nor made death, but made sin for us. It is God Himself become our justification and redemption.

The Gospel is the one central and final revelation which gives real and eternal value to all else we call revelation. Elsewhere we know; there alone we are known, and we know as we are known. It has not to do with science, or knowledge as knowledge, it has not to do with history as mere history. It has not to do with the mere occurrence of a fact, but with the meaning of it; and with its meaning not for the constitution of either God or man but for their will; it has to do with purpose and destiny. It does not tell us of God's metaphysical nature, but of His will and love. It does not give us a speculative theology, but an experimental. Nor does it give us a science of man. There is no revealed anthropology or psychology. Nor does it give us a history verified beyond all

possibilities from a criticism merely historic. None of these is the gift in revelation. What is revealed is a teleology. It is man's destiny and God's practical guarantee of it. It is what He is going to do with us; nay, more, what He has done with us—not simply what He proposes with us, but what He has committed us to. When Christ died all died. Our divinest destiny is not simply revealed in the Gospel, it is conveyed to us there. It is not written up in Christ, it is branded in; it is not written on our sky, but burnt in on our soul by the cross of Christ. It is not a matter of knowledge but of life, of action, of power, of fire, of crisis, of change; of a new world, a new Humanity, rising by a new creation from the ashes of the old. We can only know it as we are changed by it. It is new light as it creates new life. At its root the Christian revelation is the Christian redemption and nothing less.

But when we say revelation is redemption we mean three things which it is not. First, it is not merely the Bible. Second, it is not merely illumination and inward light, either rational or spiritual. And third, it is not evolution; though there is evolution in it (as I shall show), and its scope develops upon us. Evolution as a complete system is fatal to it.

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On this relation of revelation to evolution I do not here touch. But I should like to say a word about the second point before I go to the first.

The Word of God is not merely illumination, either rational or spiritual. Revelation is not a mat-

ter of reason apart from faith; nor is it a matter of spirit, of spiritual subjectivity, apart from the apostolic Word. Mere rationalism, apart from the Christian revelation, is bound to end, where historically it has ended, in agnosticism, or in a monism which comes to much the same thing in practice. Without Christ history has no God in the end. And mere spiritualism, or trust in the inner light detached from the historic Word, destroys revelation in other ways. It swallows it up in the fogs, bogs, and flows of mere subjectivity. No religion is possible without a revelation, and no Christian revelation is permanently possible without a historic redemption. Religion without a revelation is mere subjective religiosity; and revelation which is not redemption is mere illumination, a mere branch of spiritual culture. It is its theology that distinguishes Christianity both from the world and from all other religions. Christianity is Christianity by the redemption which distinguishes it historically from mere manifestation, mentally from mere illumination, and morally from mere amelioration.

There are many to-day who are interested in the idea of revelation, but who are repelled by the idea of redemption. "Revelation," they say, "is not a mere theological term; it has to do with religion. But redemption is theology, and theology is mere intellectual mythology. Indeed," they say, "revelation is becoming a living idea only now. We are recovering it, loosing it and letting it go. Last century, to be sure, agnostic science immured it, locked the door,

threw away the key, and wrote up 'Ignoramus et ignorabimus.' But to-day," they continue, "science itself turns gnostic and mystic. In the hands of the biologist, the physicist, the psychicist, the historian, revelation looks out and bursts out everywhere. There are many voices, and not one of them is without signification. We must own a revelation world-wide for a world beyond. But redemption is another matter. It is an idea which belongs wholly to the past, and we escaped from it long ago." You will find Christian people, I grant, who feel or who speak like that, people at least in the churches, or not unfriendly to the Church. Indeed, in many respects to-day the severest strain is not between the Church and the world, but within the Church itself. It is set up by the question whether the Gospel is a religion of revelation without redemption, or whether it is a religion where revelation must be redemption. And by redemption is here meant something radical—the redemption of the conscience, redemption from guilt, forgiveness, redemption which involves a theodicy. I do not mean mere release from the poison and pressure of life; for guilt is something more than either disease or difficulty. Is redemption, is forgiveness, but one phase in Christianity, an element early and somewhat mythological, and one fittest still for the gross sinner and the less cultured circles; or is it the very essence always of any religion in which sinful man has to do with a Holy God? Is it a crude stage which we outgrow as we pass upward in spiritual refinement, and learn

to see revelation everywhere as the inflow upon the soul of divine light and power? Is forgiveness and its reconciliation an interest which belongs chiefly to the first phase and lower end of the Christian life? As culture grows do we leave the notion of sin behind and demand something more psychological than theological for our spiritual food; an inner process promoted rather than an outward relation restored; a new way of construing the soul and its working, religion and its processes; an illumination in the soul instead of a reconciliation in Christ? Is it the soul coming to itself rather than to Christ—to its deep subliminal self instead of to its heavenly Saviour? Is Christianity to live chiefly in that region of psychological revelation, where the deeper self has well emerged through our worldly crust and dropped all the fragments of shell; and is it then to condescend to adapt itself patiently and tolerantly to those who are in the first tumult of the eruption, in the raw redemptive stage? Is God's supreme revelation of Himself some deeper depth of our nature that wells out when the subliminal fountains of our being are broken up, something that gradually emerges upon man's consciousness as he better understands the processes of the religious soul; or is it His constant and final redemption of us by a permanently super-historic act in the historic Christ?

To that question the New Testament gives but one answer from the past, and it is the condition of the Church's future, as it has been the marrow of

the Church's long experience. By all means let our preaching of the Word grow more psychological, as skilled education does; but the Word we preach does not come by any discovered psychology of ours, it comes by God's revealed act and gift in the cross of Christ. It comes in experience but not from it, else it were no revelation. Human speech becomes the divine Word only as our words are moved, filled, and ruled by the grace of God. The gift in revelation is not truth but life, not light but power, not novelty but certainty, not progress but finality, not a new stage of evolution but a new creation, a new birth, a passage from death to life. No amount of light can annul a moral curse, no science, no intuition. And it is a moral curse on us that a saving God has to do with, as a holy God. Our hell is nothing He can slake with the dew of His pity, but something He must quench in the blood of His grace. In His love and His pity He may redeem us, as He did Israel, from outward foes; but it is in His holy grace and His holy cross that He must save us from ourselves, from our guilt, from man's fear and hate of His holy name. If that is not a situation manufactured by an old and morbid theology, it indicates the revelation we need in our last stress. It is the revelation neither of an Ideal nor a Lover, but of a Redeemer.

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I now come to my first point in connection with what revelation is not. Revelation is not merely the Bible. It is what gives value to the Bible; it is the Gospel in the Bible. It is not a book saying something, but a person doing something. We may mis-

lead the unskilled by a certain way of speaking of the Bible as the Word of God. The Word of God is the Gospel, which is *in* the Bible, but it is not identical with the Bible. The soul is not the body, though it is inseparable from the body, and is the object of the body. Revelation is less than the Bible, and it is more. Its compass is very small, smaller than the Bible. So far as words go, you can pack it into a much less space. In mere statement it is simply the message of Christ living on earth, dying, risen, and living in glory, and all for God's glory in our reconciliation. You can get it into a verse like John iii. 16. But if its compass is small its content is vast, infinite. It is like a soul of genius, like an eternal soul, in a small body. Its range is beyond the compass of any book. For it can only be written out on the scale of all Humanity. And it is to be satisfied with nothing less than the total conquest of history, and its complete absorption in the Regeneration. Christ's span of life was brief enough, yet He contains Christianity, He did not simply found it. And, moreover, above all its range in history, past or future, this revelation, this Gospel, involves at its spring the whole resource of infinite God. You can have that in no possible book or library of books, but only in the soul of Christ, in the work of Christ, in a present Christ, in the Holy Ghost.

If revelation is, at the root of it, redemption, if it is God's redeeming Act on life, and not a mere reinterpretation of life, then it cannot be identical with a book. The book of a great genius might interpret

life anew, but it could not redeem life. Novelty, a new problem, a fresh insight, is not the essence of either revelation or redemption, but power is. And yet how could this revelation reach us without a book? Of course a book is not an act; it is the record of an act, or it is the product, the monument, of an act. It tells us of an act before it, or it registers the act done in producing it. The book indeed is not the act, true enough; but yet it is quite a necessary part of the act and its effect. What would our past be to us if we had no record of it? What were the drama of *Macbeth* transacted in Shakespere's imagination alone if he had not given us the play in our hands?

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Is it not clear that for a revelation like God's we must have a book, and yet more than a book? I will put it thus. In the strict sense, revelation has to do only with God, and with God only in His personal relation to us. *To us*. But then we are not a heap of sand. Humanity is not a mere mass of units. It is an organism, with a history. And revelation therefore is God's treatment of us *in a history*, in a Humanity. Paul says it is to bring all mankind to the fulness of the stature of a colossal man in Christ Jesus. If God's treatment of us be redemption, it is a historic redemption. Its content is the living, loving, saving God; its compass is cosmic; its sphere is human history, actual history. The means it must use is action, it is not literature. God does not save man by authorship, by dropping a book from the sky, by dictating a work of more than genius. That might be the way of Mohammedanism, or Mormonism, but

it is not the way of the Gospel. God did not save us even by inspiring a book. He did something, which in its turn inspired the book. Christ wrote nothing, He commanded nothing to be written. And for both prophets and apostles, for Old Testament and New Testament, the writing was an afterthought. The Gospel gift from God is neither a book nor a genius, but a Christ. It is Himself. It is a person, an incarnation. It is Himself in history, that is to say, Himself in personal, moral action, Himself acting with all His holy might in sinful Humanity and on its scale, Himself made sin for us. The gift, then, is not a book but a fact, a Person, and His consummatory Act.

242 But it is not even these treated as bare facts and locked in a glass shrine like holy relics with a χάρις ἀθίκτων ἱερῶν. They are facts with a meaning and a value. Christ's revelation is not an incident that happened to Him, but an Act that He put Himself into. He gave Himself in it; and gave Himself, not to our historic knowledge, nor to our rational conviction and assent, but to our living faith. And what does that mean? Does faith mean just that we credit the fact of Christ or of the Cross? Does not everything turn on the content and meaning of that fact, its inner value, the purpose of that act, the moral interpretation of it, the intention and effect of it, the way God knows us in it? Especially on this last. To know that is more than just knowing God to be there. It is rather knowing that there we are known of God. That is the kind of revelation that makes Christian

religion. Revelation is less being taught of God than being known of God; and religion, faith, is knowing that we are known, knowing *as* we are known, knowing in kind God's knowledge of us, knowing it back again, knowing the true inwardness of the historic fact in which we are known, apprehending that wherein we are apprehended in Christ.

So it is not a matter of sight but of insight, of personal response, of response with our person. The mere crucifixion of Jesus was no revelation. Many people saw it to whom it meant nothing more than *any* execution. It does not reach us as a religious thing, as revelation, till it receives a certain interpretation. And not any interpretation, allegorical or fanciful, will do, but the interpretation which saw God in it, and especially saw what God saw in it; which saw not what He had to put up with but what He did in it, and saw that with the whole person and not with the vision alone, with an act of will and final committal and not of mere perception. Not a soul saw it in that way when Christ died. No one saw it or answered it as the Act or Purpose of God, only as the failure of another Messiah. Therefore, besides God's Act we must have God's version of His Act. God must be His own interpreter. He must explain Himself, and His action. We have seen that none can act for God, none reveal Him, but only Himself in Christ. But we must take this other step. None but Himself can reveal His own revelation. "God only knows the love of God," when it comes to this. So, besides God's own Act in Christ's cross, we must

have, as part of it, God's own reading of it as His, and as He meant it. A man's great life-work may be to write a book revolutionising thought, but it is useless unless he secure that it is published, read, attended to—sometimes expounded. So God's own Act of redeeming is not completed without its self-interpretation. That is *His Word*. The Work goes sounding on its glorious way in the Word of it, the preaching of it. The Act of redeeming completes itself in the Word of reconciliation. The redeeming Act in Christ goes on preaching itself in the apostles it made. Truly, God's self-revelation is done in the redeeming Act of Christ—"He commendeth His own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"; but it only comes home by the Word, the *preaching*, of the apostles, whereby Christ reveals His revelation to individual experience. The apostles did not sit down to *write* as soon as they were inspired with insight into the meaning of Christ crucified. They gave themselves up to the new Christ as they had never done when they were but disciples, and they began preaching. They were preaching the Word, and sending home, in His Spirit, God's Act in Christ, *before* the most precious part of the Bible was there at all—the New Testament. It was the Word, the Gospel, that made the New Testament. It was the preached Word that completed the revelation—not the written Word, which is but the memorandum, or the supplement, of the preaching, and reflects that kind of power. The grand value of the New Testament, then, is that it is the supreme monument of

the apostles' preaching and action. To put it in a crescendo, it is the condensed *register* of their spoken *insight* into God's *meaning* of His own *action* in *Christ*. And it was the inspiration of the Redeemer that gave them this understanding. So that we might, perhaps, put it also in this way: God smote upon the world in Christ's act of redemption; it sounded in the apostles' word of reconciliation; and it reverberated, and goes on doing so, in the Bible.

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Have we not, then, the three things in revelation? We have, first, God's pure Fact and Act of redeeming revelation in Christ and Him crucified; we have, second, His true, but not pure, Word of revelation in the apostles; and thirdly, we have one monument of that twofold revelation in the Bible. (The other monument is the Church, which I have not to discuss here.)

But, "God's true, *but not pure*, word of interpretation in the apostles"! This need make no one uneasy. Christ's interpretation, in the apostles, of His sinless Self and His finished Word was done through fallible men under historic and imperfect conditions. The sense of their translation is sound and final, but the form is not perfect like a statue, nor is the marble without flaws. May I remind you that God's own Act in Christ itself rose out of the very midst of human history, and so it has pieces of that history clinging to it. It did not hover over history like the cross seen by Constantine's army. Nor was it let down on history, perfect in beauty, final in form, and four square every way, like the heavenly Jerusalem

descending out of heaven from God merely to *alight* on earth. That is poetry, not history. The act of God in Christ was imbedded and involved in history. It was woven into the tissue of history. It had a long and wide preparation in history. It was blended into the pattern of Humanity. It was grafted into the great psychology of the race. Miraculous as it was, it was that. Transcendent as it was, it was immanent in the vast continuity of human affairs. So much was this the case that it has created the most tremendous difficulties for our faith. The greatest difficulties have been created by the fact that the death of Christ, which consummated God's purpose with the race, was yet a judicial murder and a national crime. "Him, delivered by the determinate counsel of God, ye *wickedly* slew." The one act in which God
245 forgave the world was, on its under side, an act never to be forgiven. The eternal salvation came by what Christ called an eternal sin. I do not go into discussion of that vast, that unspeakable problem. I only mention it to show what we must be prepared for if we take in earnest a historic Christianity, how mixed in its form such a revelation must be, how we must allow discounts and rebates. I am suggesting that if that is so with the *Act* of salvation it is true also of the *Word* of that Act, and especially of the Bible *record* of that Word. Divine truth and human error are distinguishable but inseparable. If the pure and perfect Act of God when it entered human history was mixed with human sin in a way that baffles our thought, need we be surprised that the

Word of that Act, as *it* entered human vehicles and human story (by speech or writing), should also be mixed with foreign and imperfect elements in a perplexing way, and a way we cannot mark off with scientific exactness? If the *Act* of salvation was bound up with a crime, need we be startled if its *Word* is mingled with error? Nay, the sinless Son of God Himself—God's Word in John's sense—was, by His own consent, by His emptying of Himself, limited and wrong on certain points where now, by His grace, we are right. I mean points like the authorship of a Psalm, or perhaps the Parousia. Need we be surprised, then, if we find in the written Word the limitations which were part of the incarnation of the eternal Word. The Bible is at once a document of man's religion and more inwardly and deeply, a form of God's Word, and the chief form that we now have; but, as it wears a human and historic shape, it is not immune from human weakness, limitation, and error. The Bible is the great sacrament of the Word, wherein the elements may perish if only the Word itself endure. The letter of Scripture is the reverend bread and wine, but the consecrating Word and the power they convey is the Gospel.

The Bible is there for the sake of the Gospel within it. Anything might happen to the Bible if only it glorified the Gospel. That is the true and safe perspective for us. We must take the whole Gospel for our salvation, but we need not take, cannot take, the whole Bible. I find some help in a way of putting it which others may think fine drawn.

I ventured once to say we need not take *the whole Bible*, but we must take *the Bible as a whole*. Truly, we cannot do what we are sometimes asked to do. We cannot dissect the Word, the revelation, out of the Bible and hold it up to be sharply seen; but we can distil it. We can see it as a finer light in light. We can feel in the Bible a fulness which we can never put together from its parts. It is the "fulness of the whole earth that is God's glory," not its detail; so it is the fulness of the Bible, the Bible as a totality, that is the Word of Gospel, not a Bible in sections, texts, and atoms. There is a Bible within the Bible emerging and enlarging through it. That is God's saving will and work, which He makes felt. It is the gospel of His redemptive purpose and action. The Gospel, the revelation, is organic in the Bible, it is not composite. It came in divers times and manners, but as the dawn comes in different skies, and lands, and seasons; it is not pieced together as a puzzle that can be taken down. The Bible is not true in compartments. Only the lowest organisms are equally vital in each several and severed part.

And, again, this unity and fulness of the Bible, like the fulness of the whole earth, is not something to be viewed on the flat, but in a perspective. To the infant everything is equally near, and it puts out its hand for the gas as it does for its bottle. Only an experience (which we all forget) teaches us the meaning of near and far. And there is no greater difference between the trained and the untrained mind than the power of judging distance, the sense

of relative values, the tact of degrees, the grasp of the hierarchy of truth; or in religion it is the measure of things according to what Paul calls the proportion of faith. To the untaught man most things, except so far as they affect his business or his bosom, are of equal and monotonous value. His world is a mere background for some form of egoism; and it is a background painted as a piece of decoration would be, and not as a picture—it is on the flat. It is without perspective. Heaven is as near as earth; the horizon is at the door. The man is as ready to be interested in one thing as another, if only it be made interesting. His universe is like an infinite newspaper in which items of every kind are lowered before him on one sheet of things clean and unclean. But that is not the way of life or the manner of truth. Truth and reality exist in infinite gradations; among truths there is primogeniture and prerogative; there is degree, priority, rank, and place; there are shades, perspectives, evolutions. Beginnings rise to closes; there is a development of truth as well as of time, which grows richer and fuller always, and shows more and more the true right to reign. The truth of the world as one universe, the truth in which it is all destined to end, rises out of it in the glorious hierarchy of a varied and ordered fulness, from men, angels, and archangels, to the very Son of God. Out of a fiery mist and chaos the world rose, and out of the world comes the wonder of human society, its ordered discipline and achievements, the principles of genius, the victory of the saints, and the redemp-

tion of the Son of God; from which the Church rises as the greatest product of history, and the Bible as the senior colleague of the Church. So it is also within the Bible itself. Elements are there which in time we leave behind, because they were only a soil from which the ruling truths grew, a medium from which they condensed and rose. Beliefs and cults are shed which were but the chrysalis of living faith. The silk is drawn off the cocoon and spun fine. Truths themselves are refined and exalted, and lost in higher truths. Out of the flux of imagination there crystallises the jewel of faith. To change the image, out of the popular religion of Israel as a mere piece of civilisation hatches the living revelation of God, with healing in its wings. Out of tribal wars and national deliverances rises the world's redemption. In the midst of some Hebrew superstition emerges
248 the prophetic religion. Out of orgiastic dervishes develop the prophets. Out of prophetic fantasy ascends apostolic faith. Eschatological dreams ascend and come to themselves in the kingdom of heaven and the city of God. Thus as we ponder our Bible it becomes alive not at points only, or in great texts, but all along the swelling line. We come to see in it a living process, in which there are continually being thrown to the surface those things that are meant to consolidate, and stay, and rule. And there is also a debris thrown down, which we can then afford to leave and lose. There is a great process of crystallisation going on, and the mere bulk of the book is no measure of the diamonds

it makes. The Christian doctor, for instance, loses his belief in demons, while he gains faith in Christ who exorcised them. The preacher gains faith in the Spirit as he strips off those early rhapsodies of wild seers in Israel, or the first babblings of the young Church as it spoke with unruly tongues. Even Isaiah (to go back for an instance) held and spread the fatal belief that Jerusalem was impregnable; and long afterwards it created the public infatuation in which Jerusalem was overthrown; but Christ drew the heart out of the prophet's message, and founded on it a Church against which the gates of hell cannot prevail. We are being taught by recent scholarship that almost every Christian belief is the sublimation and, still more, the capitalisation into eternal values, of dreams or mythologies that filled the world of that time. They had worked like yeast in the generations before, and they swelled in aspiration among the peoples around. Christ said the great Amen to the human prayer, but not to every petition of it. He answered its need, and not its ignorance, in asking. In the Bible the Spirit of God is continually coming to itself in a creative evolution, finding itself, shedding the form of a stage to win the freedom of the goal, and keeping only the things that are before out of all the things it leaves behind. Yea, the very teaching of Christ in His apostles corrects, sublimates, and eternalises the words of His own mouth upon earth, which were sometimes said but to the hour or the man, and did not bind the Church for ever. But if ever

Christ's teaching in His preaching apostles is more valuable than His teaching of His learning disciples, it is only because of His own Act in the Cross and in the Spirit, which fulfilled and finished all. It was Christ teaching all the time, and teaching concretely, as His way was—speaking to the existing situation with the opportunism of the changeless and eternal.

Let me close by illustrating what I mean from within the teaching of Christ Himself. Take the parable of Dives and Lazarus. Regard it for a moment as if the whole Bible were squeezed into that tractable size. Treat it as the Bible in small—as a Bibelot. What have you there? You have the medium and the matter, the husk and the kernel, the setting and the jewel, the ore and the gold, the scenery and the soul. You have the large pictorial element, the vehicle, and within it the truth or idea. You have scenery sketched in from the notions current at that time about the world beyond death, and you have the truth which Christ used these to teach. You have a background taken over ready made from inferior artists, and you have the foreground carefully painted by the Lord Himself. The day is gone by when we could find in the drapery of the parable a topography of the future state, guaranteed accurate by the authority of Christ. He tells us nothing of such posthumous geography or procedure. He gives us no book of the dead. He did not come either to correct or to sanction the popular ideas on such things. He simply made parables of them, as in other parables He invented or remembered. He

may have shared these popular beliefs, as He knew but of a flat earth and a revolving sun. He could treat these notions as the mere setting for His truths. They were but fuel for His flame.

But beyond all the scenery He had two ideas in the front of this parable that He did mean to stamp and to wing possibly there may be two parables fused up in our story, with an idea to each. First, He did want to press the truth, which so often engaged Him, of heaven's *bouleversement* of earth, God's subversion of the social verdict. He often taught that the kingdom of heaven was in a standing irony to the social order, that grace upset the current criteria of social worth (as in the case of the prodigal and his brother), and that it meant the revaluation of the moral values of the natural order, and often their inversion,—the first last and the last first. And, secondly, He wished to send home the principle that, in spite of that, grace had a moral basis, that it was not freakish, and was not magical, and was not sensational, that the soul's fate was settled by a moral revelation rather than a miraculous. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they believe if one rise from the dead." It is the moral appeal that is the marrow of the Gospel, not the prodigious, not the portentous, not the thaumaturgic, not the astounding; it is the spiritual, the redemptive, not the sensational. The saving revelation is addressed to the guilty conscience, not to the domestic affections, and not to the sense of wonder. It is directed to the sinful soul and not the

mind agape. Its genius is faith and not imagination, not mere sensibility; and what it would produce in us is not an impression but a confession.

Such is the Gospel in this parable; it is its truth, its burthen, its message. And such is the place of the Gospel in the Bible. It is blended, for educational purposes, with much that has no voucher, no perpetuity. Much is scaffolding that is taken down for the house to appear. The Bible has its earthly house which must be dissolved for the sake of God's building, heavenly and eternal. It is this latter that concerns our Eternity. We shall not be judged by what we thought of the Bible, but by what we did with its Gospel; not by what we knew of the Bible, but by the way it made us realise we were known of God. We shall be rich not by the ore but by the gold. It is not our wonderful body that goes with us into eternity, it is our more precious soul. So it is not the Bible, it is the Gospel. We shall not read the *Bible* any more when we pass from this world (so far as one may meddle with such forecasts); but the *Gospel* we shall
 251 read for ever and ever; and it will deepen upon our gaze as life unto life or death unto death.

But is not all this fatal to the Bible? Is it not its destruction by modern criticism? To which may I answer that the Christian function of death is not destruction but resurrection? The Bible would die well if the Gospel lived better. In the grace and providence of God Christian criticism is doing for us what death is meant to do in the same providence. It is detaching and releasing, loosing and letting go; it is

sifting the eternal Gospel from the form of history and the *milieu* of time. It is distilling the precious soul from the valuable body for heavenly places—as indeed all experience is meant to do. The great function of criticism is positive. It is not negative, not fatal. Death and judgment are not there to upset all, but to set all up; they are there less to destroy wrong than to establish right. The end of judgment is righteousness. And criticism is but the Greek for judgment, and judgment is but the Latin for righteousness. So criticism is the agent of right and truth. Judgment is not a dreadful thing but a glorious, not an awful doom but a mighty hope. That, at least, is the Bible view of it. It was looked forward to. And such is the purpose and promise of the form of judgment called criticism. It is the elimination of the Gospel from the religion of a certain race and from the record of a certain stage of culture. It is its clear display by a slow, careful, brilliant, and luminous search of the Scriptures. Amid all our popular neglect of the Bible in the Church it has never received such attention from the *mind* of the Church as it has to-day. The form of the attention is critical, and criticism always begins by being analytic, negative, and even censorious, because the abuse of authority leaves so much to clear away. But it ends with being positive and appreciative. It is a cleansing fire. It prunes for the sake of more fruit. And at this moment it is passing from the one stage to the other. It is passing into the positive, appreciative, and constructive stage. The Bible is not dead,

it is in the course of resurrection. And in such a way as I have shown. Revelation is truly in the greatest danger from evolution; but criticism would release it from mere evolution by making the book of one age to be the preacher to all time, by distinguishing the revelation from the preacher who is only made by the revelation; and it would secure by worship of the Gospel more true reverence for the Bible that grew round the Gospel.

Criticism, therefore, is not to be discouraged but to be criticised. It grows to its work at compound interest, so to say, by the criticism of criticism. One school criticises the other, correcting but continuing its tradition, and exalting its life. The higher criticises the lower, and all is criticised by the highest, by the central revelation and gospel of grace. The Bible is to be judged by its Word, and its Word is judged by its Christ and His work—the Book by the message and the message by the Act in Jesus Christ.

The one fatal thing against which I would presume to protest is the vague, careless, and, forgive me if I say, lazy habit of dismissing the Bible from your interest because you have heard, because Gashmu hath said it, that criticism has knocked the bottom out of the Bible and left the sides to fall in. You do not really know that it is so, but you have vaguely heard it. The real students of the Bible do not speak in that way, the men you do not hear so much about, but who really settle things. It is only the casual, the shallow, the gossips of that region who talk so. And to judge the Gospel by gossip,

or the Church by chit-chat, is as if you should be engrossed by the tattle of strangers about the frail and aged body in which your mother carries still a spirit so high and a faith so eternal.

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