

MAN'S NEED OF A DIVINE REVELATION

"O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." (Jeremiah 10:23)

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Psalms 119:105)

In the first passage read, the prophet of God concedes the universal need of man for a divine revelation--for a source of instruction and direction higher than the wisdom of man. In the second passage, David declares the source of man's help and counsel.

While it is irrevocably true that "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork," (Psalms 19:1); yet revelation is necessary for a complete knowledge of the one and true God. While the vast universe with its illimitable space, its glittering stars and shining sun, all testify to the praise of supernatural power; yet without a divine revelation from God, man would be at loss to know whether there are gods many, or just one--the one true and living God revealed in the Bible. Many left to study Nature without a revelation fall to worshipping Nature. The Egyptians who lived on the banks of the historic Nile River, discovered that as a result of the annual overflow there was left a sediment which enriched their lands and gave them an abundant harvest. They began to worship the river, and it became sacred to them. They failed to see God in it all. Primeval man observed that the rising sun dispelled mist and fog and brilliancy that made all nature beautiful, thus he began to worship the sun. Even in Paul's day there were those who "worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator". (Romans 1:25) Those of India have the same book of Nature that we have, and why do they not attribute honor to the God of heaven for all creation? Because they are largely without the Book called the Bible--they are without a divine revelation. The heavens that bent over Greece in Paul's day were as bright and brilliant, as beautiful and blue, as the heavens that bend over our country now. But from history we learn that the Greeks once worshipped as many as 30,000 gods. Hence man has never been able to reason "from Nature up to Nature's God". "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (I Corinthians 1:21)

GOD HAS GIVEN TO MAN A SPECIAL SUPERNATURAL REVELATION

This we know to be true because:

1. A Revelation is possible. "For with God all things are possible." (Luke 10:27) Surely the infinitely wise and infinitely powerful God can if He will, reveal Himself, His attributes, His plans and His will to man.

2. A Revelation is necessary. Without it man can know nothing of God's love. Although sinful man might realize from intuition or reason, something about sin and its penalty, yet he could know nothing of God's love and grace, His provisions of pardon and salvation, without some revelation from on high. Without a divine revelation man could know nothing of the truths of immortality, of future rewards and punishments. Man is in need of a divine revelation because "the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," as Jeremiah declares in the text. Human opinion and reason are not sufficient guides in matters of life and death--in things that pertain to time and eternity. Man is limited in his investigations and discoveries in the physical realm to the five physical senses. Hence whatever man would discover in the realm of the spiritual, it must come to him by divine revelation. Since God is not subject to the perception of the five physical senses, there is no ladder by which man can climb to an understanding of the infinite. Therefore by revelation God must stoop to the level of man.

3. A Revelation is probable. If a revelation is possible and necessary, and if God loves His creatures, yearns over them, and longs to bring them into fellowship with Himself, then surely a revelation is preeminently probable.

4. A revelation is credible. If a divine revelation is possible, necessary and probable, then certainly it is to be expected that it is credible and trustworthy.

5. A Revelation is reasonable. It would seem strange that the author of our being, Who has enabled us to communicate with one another in so many wondrous ways, should never have communicated with us at all. When we concede the existence of God--concede that God is, that He is the Creator, Preserver and Benefactor of all Nature--to be consistent we must concede that the Bible is a revelation from the true and living God. God has made rich provisions to meet all temporal, rational and normal needs, not only of man, but of all living creatures. Man hungers and the earth gives forth her fruit to feed man; man thirsts and the heavens pour out their crystal treasures to quench man's thirst. There are inward cravings of the soul, however, which this world cannot supply. Man is consistently learning that he cannot "live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God". Who am I? Whence came I? What is my final destiny? Man's desire to know the answers to these questions makes him preeminently different from the beast of the field. Does Nature answer these questions? Can human reason and philosophy offer any help in answering them?

Without a divine revelation man must simply recognize that he is here, a higher order of animal creation, to live this life to the end, then die and be forgotten, without ever knowing his origin, duty and destiny.

6. A Revelation is certain. This we are assured in the Bible which claims to be a revelation from God, and whose claims are fully substantiated by its recorded miracles, its fulfilled prophecy, the propagation of Christianity, and the blessings that it brings to humanity the world over.

IN EVERY AGE GOD HAS MADE HIMSELF KNOWN TO MAN
THROUGH REVELATION

1. In the Patriarchal Age God dealt with and communicated with the father of each family. In the case of Adam and Eve they never would have rendered any obedience unto God if He had not revealed Himself unto them. Neither could they have been held accountable unto God for disobedience without a divine revelation, for "where no law is, there is no transgression". (Romans 4:15) How much did they know about God? Did they give honor unto God for their creation by mere assumption? In the case of Cain and Abel, they brought an offering unto God, but why? And why was the offering of Abel accepted and the offering of Cain rejected? Paul says that it was "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain." (Hebrews 11:4) Faith always presupposes a divine revelation or command, for "faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:14)

2. In the Jewish Age God dealt with Moses instead of the father of each family. In this age there existed not a family religion, but a national religion, which religion was confined to one nation only--the nation of Israel. The Israelites would never have known how to escape the wrath of the death angel if God had not given them the instructions. They would never have known how to flee from the Egyptians and cross the Red Sea, if God had not said to Moses, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." (Exodus 14:16) The Jews would never have known anything about the tabernacle service if God had not given to Moses the pattern for building this sanctuary of God, and all the minute instructions for the worship service conducted therein.

3. In the Christian Age there is likewise a need for divine instruction in the Christian religion. Since God spoke through the fathers and through Moses in the preceding ages, we are wondering how He reveals Himself in the Christian dispensation. Paul said, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

(Hebrews 1:1-2) Aside from divine revelation it is impossible to know God and Christ. Jesus said, "All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." (Luke 10:22) That a knowledge of God and Christ is a matter of supreme importance is seen in this statement of Christ to the Father: "And this is life eternal, that they might know these the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3) Hence the reception of eternal life depends upon a knowledge of God and of Christ, and a knowledge of them depends upon divine revelation.

GOD'S REVELATION OF THE RELIGION OF JESUS CHRIST HAS
NOT ALWAYS BEEN KNOWN

Paul said, "Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began; But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, make known to all nations for the obedience of faith." (Romans 16:25-26) This being true the first inhabitants of earth did not understand the secret of the gospel and of Christianity, because it had not been fully revealed. The Old Testament prophets foretold the mission of Jesus Christ in their peculiar style. This was the great theme of the prophets of the Jewish dispensation. They very minutely and beautifully foretold Christ's mission into the world, His birth, ministry, miracles, death, burial, resurrection and final ascension into heaven. They told also in prophetic language about the establishment of His church on earth. Notwithstanding all this, no one simply by reading these prophetic declarations could fully understand the plan of salvation, because it had not been fully revealed. As the Ethiopian eunuch read from the book of Isaiah a prophecy concerning Christ, Philip said to him, "Understandest what thou readeest?" And he said, "How can I, except some man should guide me." (Acts 8:30-31) These prophets of God of Old Testament times only saw that there was something great to be developed in the future, but did not fully understand the magnitude of their own prophetic declarations.

God even kept all this a secret after Jesus came to earth. When He began His public ministry He did not speak plainly with reference to the scheme of redemption, but used various parables to give the people an idea of the future kingdom to be established, after which He made an explanation of these parabolic utterances to His apostles. To them He said, "The word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (John 14:24) When the time came for Jesus to leave the apostles and return to the Father in heaven, He promised the Holy Spirit to the apostles, and said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." (John 16:13)

When the spirit was to come to them, Jesus said that "He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26) The Holy Spirit came upon the apostles upon the first Pentecost immediately following the resurrection of Christ. Thus Paul later said, "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." (I Corinthians 2:12-13) Hence we have in the New Testament today a complete revelation of God's will concerning us. Thus James said, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of this work, this man shall be blessed in his deed." (James 1:25)

There are those today who talk about "progressive revelation" --that God continues to make revelations to men in our day. But if God did give to any man a new revelation today, he would not be privileged to know or record any more than we already have in the New Testament, the Lord said, "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 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 22:18-19) It does no good for one to contend that this divine threat applies only to those who would add to or take from the book of Revelation only, for Paul said, "But though, we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8)

GOD'S REVELATION TO US IS ETERNAL

Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35) Peter said, "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever." (I Peter 1:25)

CONCLUSION

Truly the Holy Bible is the word of God--from the true and living God--a revelation that human reason could not have produced. This revelation from God is necessary. It has been made known unto us for our spiritual good, and we should be devoutly thankful that the mystery of the gospel has been revealed unto us for our acceptance and salvation. Though God revealed that portion of His will that He wanted known in ages past, yet He has completely revealed His will unto us in this present age.