

# The Biblical Idea of Revelation

## I. The Nature of Revelation

The religion of the Bible is a frankly supernatural religion. By this is not meant merely that, according to it, all men, as creatures, live, move and have their being in God. It is meant that, according to it, God has intervened extraordinarily, in the course of the sinful world's development, for the salvation of men otherwise lost. In Eden the Lord God had been present with sinless man in such a sense as to form a distinct element in his social environment (Gen. iii. 8). This intimate association was broken up by the Fall. But God did not therefore withdraw Himself from concernment with men. Rather, He began at once a series of interventions in human history by means of which man might be rescued from his sin and, despite it, brought to the end destined for him. These interventions involved the segregation of a people for Himself, by whom God should be known, and whose distinction should be that God should be "nigh unto them" as He was not to other nations (Deut. iv. 7; Ps. cxlv. 18). But this people was not permitted to imagine that it owed its segregation to anything in itself fitted to attract or determine the Divine preference; no consciousness was more poignant in Israel than that Jehovah had chosen it, not it Him, and that Jehovah's choice of it rested solely on His gracious will. Nor was this people permitted to imagine that it was for its own sake alone that it had been singled out to be the sole recipient of the knowledge of Jehovah; it was made clear from the beginning that God's mysteriously gracious dealing with it had as its ultimate end the blessing of the whole world (Gen. xii. 2.3; xvii. 4.5.6.16; xviii. 18; xxii. 18; cf Rom. iv. 13), the bringing together again of the divided families of the earth under the glorious reign of Jehovah, and the reversal of the curse under which the whole world lay for its sin (Gen. xii. 3). Meanwhile, however, Jehovah was known only in Israel. To Israel God showed His word and made known His statutes and judgments, and after this fashion He dealt with no other nation; and therefore none other knew His judgments (Ps. cxlvii. 19 f.). Accordingly, when the hope of Israel (who was also the desire of all nations) came, His own lips unhesitatingly declared that the salvation He brought, though of universal application, was "from the Jews" (On. iv. 221). And the nations to which this salvation had not been made known are declared by the chief agent in its proclamation to them to be, meanwhile, "far off," "having no hope" and "without God in the world" (Eph. ii. 12), because they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenant of the promise.

The religion of the Bible thus announces itself, not as the product of men's search after God, if haply they may feel after Him and find Him, but as the creation in men of the gracious God, forming a people for Himself, that they may show forth His praise. In other words, the religion of the Bible presents itself as distinctively a revealed religion. Or rather, to speak more exactly, it announces itself as the revealed religion, as the only revealed religion; and sets itself as such over against all other religions, which are represented as all products, in a sense in which it is not, of the art and device of man.

It is not, however, implied in this exclusive claim to revelation -which is made by the religion of the Bible in all the stages of its history -that the living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that in them is, has left Himself without witness among the peoples of the world (Acts xiv. 17). It is asserted indeed, that in the process of His redemptive work, God suffered for a season all the nations to walk in their own ways; but it is added that to none of them has He failed to do good, and to give from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling their

hearts with food and gladness. And not only is He represented as thus constantly showing Himself in His providence not far from any one of them, thus wooing them to seek Him if haply they might feel after Him and find Him (Acts xvii. 27), but as from the foundation of the world openly manifesting Himself to them in the works of His hands, in which His everlasting power and Divinity are clearly seen (Rom. i. 20). That men at large have not retained Him in their knowledge, or served Him as they ought, is not due therefore to failure on His part to keep open the way to knowledge of Him, but to the darkening of their senseless hearts by sin and to the vanity of their sin-deflected reasonings (Rom. i. 21 ff.), by means of which they have supplanted the truth of God by a lie and have come to worship and serve the creature rather than the ever-blessed Creator. It is, indeed, precisely because in their sin they have thus held down the truth in unrighteousness and have refused to have God in their knowledge (so it is intimated); and because, moreover, in their sin, the revelation God gives of Himself in His works of creation and providence no longer suffices for men's needs, that God has intervened supernaturally in the course of history to form a people for Himself, through whom at length all the world should be blessed.

It is quite obvious that there are brought before us in these several representations two species or stages of revelation, which should be discriminated to avoid confusion. There is the revelation which God continuously makes to all men: by it His power and Divinity are made known. And there is the revelation which He makes exclusively to His chosen people: through it His saving grace is made known. Both species or stages of revelation are insisted upon throughout the Scriptures. They are, for example, brought significantly together in such a declaration as we find in Ps. xix: "The heavens declare the glory of God . . . their line is gone out through all the earth" (vers. 1.4); "The law of Jehovah is perfect, restoring the soul" (ver. 7). The Psalmist takes his beginning here from the praise of the glory of God, the Creator of all that is, which has been written upon the very heavens, that none may fail to see it. From this he rises, however, quickly to the more full-throated praise of the mercy of Jehovah, the covenant God, who has visited His people with saving instruction. Upon this higher revelation there is finally based a prayer for salvation from sin, which ends in a great threefold acclamation, instinct with adoring gratitude: "O Jehovah, my rock, and my redeemer" (ver. 14). "The heavens," comments Lord Bacon, "indeed tell of the glory of God, but not of His will according to which the poet prays to be pardoned and sanctified." In so commenting, Lord Bacon touches the exact point of distinction between the two species or stages of revelation. The one is adapted to man as man; the other to man as sinner; and since man, on becoming sinner, has not ceased to be man, but has only acquired new needs requiring additional provisions to bring him to the end of his existence, so the revelation directed to man as sinner does not supersede that given to man as man, but supplements it with these new provisions for his attainment, in his new condition of blindness, helplessness and guilt induced by sin, of the end of his being.

These two species or stages of revelation have been commonly distinguished from one another by the distinctive names of natural and supernatural revelation, or general and special revelation, or natural and soteriological revelation. Each of these modes of discriminating them has its particular fitness and describes a real difference between the two in nature, reach or purpose. The one is communicated through the media of natural phenomena, occurring in the course of Nature or of history; the other implies an intervention in the natural course of things and is not merely in source but in mode supernatural. The one is addressed generally to all intelligent creatures, and is therefore accessible to all men; the other is addressed to a special class of sinners, to whom God would make known His salvation. The one has in view to meet and supply the natural need of creatures for knowledge of their God; the other to rescue broken and deformed sinners from their sin and its consequences. But, though thus distinguished from one another, it is important that the two species or stages of revelation should not be set in opposition to one another, or the closeness of their mutual relations or the constancy of their interaction be obscured. They constitute together a unitary whole, and each is incomplete

without the other. In its most general idea, revelation is rooted in creation and the relations with His intelligent creatures into which God has brought Himself by giving them being. Its object is to realize the end of man's creation, to be attained only through knowledge of God and perfect and unbroken communion with Him. On the entrance of sin into the world, destroying this communion with God and obscuring the knowledge of Him derived from Nature, another mode of revelation was necessitated, having also another content, adapted to the new relation to God and the new conditions of intellect, heart and will brought about by sin. It must not be supposed, however, that this new mode of revelation was an *ex post facto* expedient, introduced to meet an unforeseen contingency. The actual course of human development was in the nature of the case the expected and the intended course of human development, for which man was created; and revelation, therefore, in its double form was the Divine purpose for man from the beginning, and constitutes a unitary provision for the realization of the end of his creation in the actual circumstances in which he exists. We may distinguish in this unitary revelation the two elements by the cooperation of which the effect is produced; but we should bear in mind that only by their cooperation is the effect produced. Without special revelation, general revelation would be for sinful men incomplete and ineffective, and could issue, as in point of fact it has issued wherever it alone has been accessible, only in leaving them without excuse (Rom. i. 20). Without general revelation, special revelation would lack that basis in the fundamental knowledge of God as the mighty and wise, righteous and good, maker and ruler of all things, apart from which the further revelation of this great God's interventions in the world for the salvation of sinners could not be either intelligible, credible or operative.

Only in Eden has general revelation been adequate to the needs of man. Not being a sinner, man in Eden had no need of that grace of God itself by which sinners are restored to communion with Him, or of the special revelation of this grace of God to sinners to enable them to live with God. And not being a sinner, man in Eden, as he contemplated the works of God, saw God in the unclouded mirror of his mind with a clarity of vision, and lived with Him in the untroubled depths of his heart with a trustful intimacy of association, inconceivable to sinners. Nevertheless, the revelation of God in Eden was not merely "natural." Not only does the prohibition of the forbidden fruit involve a positive commandment (Gen. ii. 16), but the whole history implies an immediacy of intercourse with God which cannot easily be set to the credit of the picturesque art of the narrative, or be fully accounted for by the vividness of the perception of God in His works proper to sinless creatures. The impression is strong that what is meant to be conveyed to us is that man dwelt with God in Eden, and enjoyed with Him immediate and not merely mediate communion. In that case, we may understand that if man had not fallen, he would have continued to enjoy immediate intercourse with God, and that the cessation of this immediate intercourse is due to sin. It is not then the supernaturalness of special revelation which is rooted in sin, but, if we may be allowed the expression, the specialness of supernatural revelation. Had man not fallen, heaven would have continued to lie about him through all his history, as it lay about his infancy; every man would have enjoyed direct vision of God and immediate speech with Him. Man having fallen, the cherubim and the flame of a sword, turning every way, keep the path: and God breaks His way in a round-about fashion into man's darkened heart to reveal there His redemptive love. By slow steps and gradual stages He at once works out His saving purpose and molds the world for its reception, choosing a people for Himself and training it through long and weary ages, until at last when the fulness of time has come, He bares His arm and sends out the proclamation of His great salvation to all the earth.

Certainly, from the gate of Eden onward, God's general revelation ceased to be, in the strict sense, supernatural. It is, of course, not meant that God deserted His world and left it to fester in its iniquity. His providence still ruled over all, leading steadily onward to the goal for which man had been created, and of the attainment of which in God's own good time and way the very continuance of men's existence, under God's providential government, was a pledge. And His Spirit still everywhere wrought upon the hearts of men, stirring up all their powers (though

created in the image of God, marred and impaired by sin) to their best activities, and to such splendid effect in every department of human achievement as to command the admiration of all ages, and in the highest region of all, that of conduct, to call out from an apostle the encomium that though they had no law they did by nature (observe the word "nature") the things of the law. All this, however, remains within the limits of Nature, that is to say, within the sphere of operation of Divinely directed and assisted second causes. It illustrates merely the heights to which the powers of man may attain under the guidance of providence and the influences of what we have learned to call God's "common grace." Nowhere, throughout the whole ethnic domain, are the conceptions of God and His ways put within the reach of man, through God's revelation of Himself in the works of creation and providence, transcended; nowhere is the slightest knowledge betrayed of anything concerning God and His purposes, which could be known only by its being supernaturally told to men. Of the entire body of "saving truth," for example, which is the burden of what we call "special revelation," the whole heathen world remained in total ignorance. And even its hold on the general truths of religion, not being vitalized by supernatural enforcements, grew weak, and its knowledge of the very nature of God decayed, until it ran out to the dreadful issue which Paul sketches for us in that inspired philosophy of religion which he incorporates in the latter part of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

Behind even the ethnic development, there lay, of course, the supernatural intercourse of man with God which had obtained before the entrance of sin into the world, and the supernatural revelations at the gate of Eden (Gen. iii. 8), and at the second origin of the human race, the Flood (Gen. viii. 21,22; ix. 1-17). How long the tradition of this primitive revelation lingered in nooks and corners of the heathen world, conditioning and vitalizing the natural revelation of God always accessible, we have no means of estimating. Neither is it easy to measure the effect of God's special revelation of Himself to His people upon men outside the bounds of, indeed, but coming into contact with, this chosen people, or sharing with them a common natural inheritance. Lot and Ishmael and Esau can scarcely have been wholly ignorant of the word of God which came to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; nor could the Egyptians from whose hands God wrested His people with a mighty arm fail to learn something of Jehovah, any more than the mixed multitudes who witnessed the ministry of Christ could fail to infer something from His gracious walk and mighty works. It is natural to infer that no nation which was intimately associated with Israel's life could remain entirely unaffected by Israel's revelation. But whatever impressions were thus conveyed reached apparently individuals only: the heathen which surrounded Israel, even those most closely affiliated with Israel, remained heathen; they had no revelation. In the sporadic instances when God visited an alien with a supernatural communication - such as the dreams sent to Abimelech (Gen. xx.) and to Pharaoh (Gen. xl. xli.) and to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan, ii. 1 ff.) and to the soldier in the camp of the Midian (Jgs. vii. 13) - it was in the interests, not of the heathen world, but of the chosen people that they were sent; and these instances derive their significance wholly from this fact. There remain, no doubt, the mysterious figure of Melchizedek, perhaps also of Jethro, and the strange apparition of Balaam, who also, however, appear in the sacred narrative only in connection with the history of God's dealings with His people and in their interest. Their unexplained appearance cannot in any event avail to modify the general fact that the life of the heathen peoples lay outside the supernatural revelation of God. The heathen were suffered to walk in their own ways (Acts xiv. 16).

## II. The Process of Revelation

Meanwhile, however, God had not forgotten them, but was preparing salvation for them also through the supernatural revelation of His grace that He was making to His people. According to the Biblical representation, in the midst of and working confluent with the revelation which He

has always been giving of Himself on the plane of Nature, God was making also from the very fall of man a further revelation of Himself on the plane of grace. In contrast with His general, natural revelation, in which all men by virtue of their very nature as men share, this special, supernatural revelation was granted at first only to individuals, then progressively to a family, a tribe, a nation, a race, until, when the fulness of time was come, it was made the possession of the whole world. It may be difficult to obtain from Scripture a clear account of why God chose thus to give this revelation of His grace only progressively; or, to be more explicit, through the process of a historical development. Such is, however, the ordinary mode of the Divine working: it is so that God made the worlds, it is so that He creates the human race itself, the recipient of this revelation, it is so that He builds up His kingdom in the world and in the individual soul, which only gradually comes whether to the knowledge of God or to the fruition of His salvation. As to the fact, the Scriptures are explicit, tracing for us, or rather embodying in their own growth, the record of the steady advance of this gracious revelation through definite stages from its first faint beginnings to its glorious completion in Jesus Christ.

So express is its relation to the development of the kingdom of God itself, or rather to that great series of Divine operations which are directed to the building up of the kingdom of God in the world, that it is sometimes confounded with them, or thought of as simply their reflection in the contemplating mind of man. Thus it is not infrequently said that revelation, meaning this special redemptive revelation, has been communicated in deeds, not in words; and it is occasionally elaborately argued that the sole manner in which God has revealed Himself as the Saviour of sinners is just by performing those mighty acts by which sinners are saved. This is not, however, the Biblical representation. Revelation is, of course, often made through the instrumentality of deeds; and the series of His great redemptive acts by which He saves the world constitutes the preeminent revelation of the grace of God - so far as these redemptive acts are open to observation and are perceived in their significance. But revelation, after all, is the correlate of understanding and has as its proximate end just the production of knowledge, though not, of course, knowledge for its own sake, but for the sake of salvation. The series of the redemptive acts of God, accordingly, can properly be designated "revelation" only when and so far as they are contemplated as adapted and designed to produce knowledge of God and His purpose and methods of grace. No bare series of unexplained acts can be thought, however, adapted to produce knowledge, especially if these acts be, as in this case, of a highly transcendental character. Nor can this particular series of acts be thought to have as its main design the production of knowledge; its main design is rather to save man. No doubt the production of knowledge of the Divine grace is one of the means by which this main design of the redemptive acts of God is attained. But this only renders it the more necessary that the proximate result of producing knowledge should not fail; and it is doubtless for this reason that the series of redemptive acts of God has not been left to explain itself, but the explanatory word has been added to it. Revelation thus appears, however, not as the mere reflection of the redeeming acts of God in the minds of men, but as a factor in the redeeming work of God, a component part of the series of His redeeming acts, without which that series would be incomplete and so far inoperative for its main end. Thus the Scriptures represent it, not confounding revelation with the series of the redemptive acts of God, but placing it among the redemptive acts of God and giving it a function as a substantive element in the operations by which the merciful God saves sinful men. It is therefore not made even a mere constant accompaniment of the redemptive acts of God, giving their explanation that they may be understood. It occupies a far more independent place among them than this, and as frequently precedes them to prepare their way as it accompanies or follows them to interpret their meaning. It is, in one word, itself a redemptive act of God and by no means the least important in the series of His redemptive acts.

This might, indeed, have been inferred from its very nature, and from the nature of the salvation which was being wrought out by these redemptive acts of God. One of the most grievous of the effects of sin is the deformation of the image of God reflected in the human mind, and there can

be no recovery from sin which does not bring with it the correction of this deformation and the reflection in the soul of man of the whole glory of the Lord God Almighty. Man is an intelligent being; his superiority over the brute is found, among other things, precisely in the direction of all his life by his intelligence; and his blessedness is rooted in the true knowledge of his God - for this is life eternal, that we should know the only true God and Him whom He has sent. Dealing with man as an intelligent being, God the Lord has saved him by means of a revelation, by which he has been brought into an ever more and more adequate knowledge of God, and been led ever more and more to do his part in working out his own salvation with fear and trembling as he perceived with ever more and more clearness how God is working it out for him through mighty deeds of grace.

This is not the place to trace, even in outline, from the material point of view, the development of God's redemptive revelation from its first beginnings, in the promise given to Abraham - or rather in what has been called the Protevangelium at the gate of Eden - to its completion in the accent and work of Christ and the teaching of His apostles; a steadily advancing development, which, as it lies spread out to view in the pages of Scripture, takes to those who look at it from the consummation backward, the appearance of the shadow cast athwart preceding ages by the great figure of Christ. Even from the formal point of view, however, there has been pointed out a progressive advance in the method of revelation, consonant with its advance in content, or rather with the advancing stages of the building up of the kingdom of God, to subserve which is the whole object of revelation. Three distinct steps in revelation have been discriminated from this point of view. They are distinguished precisely by the increasing independence of revelation of the deeds constituting the series of the redemptive acts of God, in which, nevertheless, all revelation is a substantial element. Discriminations like this must not be taken too absolutely; and in the present instance the chronological sequence cannot be pressed. But, with much interlacing, three generally successive stages of revelation may be recognized, producing periods at least characteristically of what we may somewhat conventionally call theophany, prophecy and inspiration. What may be somewhat indefinitely marked off as the Patriarchal age is characteristically "the period of Outward Manifestations, and Symbols, and Theophanies": during it "God spoke to men through their senses, in physical phenomena, as the burning bush, the cloudy pillar, or in sensuous forms, as men, angels, etc. . . . In the Prophetic age, on the contrary, the prevailing mode of revelation was by means of inward prophetic inspiration": God spoke to men characteristically by the movements of the Holy Spirit in their hearts." Prevaingly, at any rate from Samuel downwards, the supernatural revelation was a revelation in the hearts of the foremost thinkers of the people, or, as we call it, prophetic inspiration, without the aid of external sensuous symbols of God" (A. B. Davidson, *OT Prophecy*, 1903, p. 148; cf. pp. 12-14, 145 ff.). This internal method of revelation reaches its culmination in the New Testament period, which is preeminently the age of the Spirit. What is especially characteristic of this age is revelation through the medium of the written word, what may be called apostolic as distinguished from prophetic inspiration. The revealing Spirit speaks through chosen men as His organs, but through these organs in such a fashion that the most intimate processes of their souls become the instruments by means of which He speaks His mind. Thus at all events there are brought clearly before us three well-marked modes of revelation, which we may perhaps designate respectively, not with perfect discrimination, it is true, but not misleadingly, (1) external manifestations, (2) internal suggestion, and (3) concursive operation.

### III. Modes of Revelation

Theophany may be taken as the typical form of "external manifestation"; but by its side may be ranged all of those mighty works by which God makes Himself known, including express miracles, no doubt, but along with them every supernatural intervention in the affairs of men, by

means of which a better understanding is communicated of what God is or what, are His purposes of grace to a sinful race. Under "internal suggestion" may be subsumed all the characteristic phenomena of what is most, properly spoken of as "prophecy": visions and dreams, which, according to a fundamental passage (Num. xii. 6), constitute the typical forms of prophecy, and with them the whole "prophetic word," which shares its essential characteristic with visions and dreams, since it comes not by the will of man but from God. By "concurrent operation" may be meant that form of revelation illustrated in an inspired psalm or epistle or history, in which no human activity - not even the control of the will - is superseded, but the Holy Spirit works in, with and through them all in such a manner as to communicate to the product qualities distinctly superhuman. There is no age in the history of the religion of the Bible, from that of Moses to that of Christ and His apostles, in which all these modes of revelation do not find place. One or another may seem particularly characteristic of this age or of that; but they all occur in every age. And they occur side by side, broadly speaking, on the same level. No discrimination is drawn between them in point of worthiness as modes of revelation, and much less in point of purity in the revelations communicated through them. The circumstance that God spoke to Moses, not by dream or vision but mouth to mouth, is, indeed, adverted to (Num. xii. 8) as a proof of the peculiar favor shown to Moses and even of the superior dignity of Moses above other organs of revelation: God admitted him to an intimacy of intercourse which He did not accord to others. But though Moses was thus distinguished above all others in the dealings of God with him, no distinction is drawn between the revelations given through him and those given through other organs of revelation in point either of Divinity or of authority. And beyond this we have no Scriptural warrant to go on in contrasting one mode of revelation with another. Dreams may seem to us little fitted to serve as vehicles of Divine communications. But there is no suggestion in Scripture that revelations through dreams stand on a lower plane than any others; and we should not fail to remember that the essential characteristics of revelations through dreams are shared by all forms of revelation in which (whether we should call them visions or not) the images or ideas which fill, or pass in procession through, the consciousness are determined by some other power than the recipient's own will. It may seem natural to suppose that revelations rise in rank in proportion to the fulness of the engagement of the mental activity of the recipient in their reception. But we should bear in mind that the intellectual or spiritual quality of a revelation is not derived from the recipient but from its Divine Giver. The fundamental fact in all revelation is that it is from God. This is what gives unity to the whole process of revelation, given though it may be in divers portions and in divers manners and distributed though it may be through the ages in accordance with the mere will of God, or as it may have suited His developing purpose - this and its unitary end, which is ever the building up of the kingdom of God. In whatever diversity of forms, by means of whatever variety of modes, in whatever distinguishable stages it is given, it is ever the revelation of the One God, and it is ever the one consistently developing redemptive revelation of God.

On a *prima facie* view it may indeed seem likely that a difference in the quality of their supernaturalness would inevitably obtain between revelations given through such divergent modes. The completely supernatural character of revelations given in theophanies is obvious. He who will not allow that God speaks to man, to make known His gracious purposes toward him, has no other recourse here than to pronounce the stories legendary. The objectivity of the mode of communication which is adopted is intense, and it is thrown up to observation with the greatest emphasis. Into the natural life of man God intrudes in a purely supernatural manner, bearing a purely supernatural communication. In these communications we are given accordingly just a series of "naked messages of God." But not even in the Patriarchal age were all revelations given in theophanies or objective appearances. There were dreams, and visions, and revelations without explicit intimation in the narrative of how they were communicated. And when we pass on in the history, we do not, indeed, leave behind us theophanies and objective appearances. It is not only made the very characteristic of Moses, the greatest figure in the whole history of revelation except only that of Christ, that he knew God face to face (Deut. xxxiv. 10), and God spoke to him mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches (Num. xii.

8); but throughout the whole history of revelation down to the appearance of Jesus to Paul on the road to Damascus, God has shown Himself visibly to His servants whenever it has seemed good to Him to do so and has spoken with them in objective speech. Nevertheless, it is expressly made the characteristic of the Prophetic age that God makes Himself known to His Servants "in a vision," "in a dream" (Num. xii. 6). And although, throughout its entire duration, God, in fulfillment of His promise (Deut. xviii. 18), put His words in the mouths of His prophets and gave them His commandments to speak, yet it would seem inherent in the very employment of men as instruments of revelation that the words of God given through them are spoken by human mouths; and the purity of their supernaturalness may seem so far obscured. And when it is not merely the mouths of men with which God thus serves Himself in the delivery of His messages, but their minds and hearts as well - the play of their religious feelings, or the processes of their logical reasoning, or the tenacity of their memories, as, say, in a psalm or in an epistle, or a history - the supernatural element in the communication may easily seem to retire still farther into the background. It can scarcely be a matter of surprise, therefore, that question has been raised as to the relation of the natural and the supernatural in such revelations, and, in many current manners of thinking and speaking of them, the completeness of their supernaturalness has been limited and curtailed in the interests of the natural instrumentalities employed. The plausibility of such reasoning renders it the more necessary that we should observe the unvarying emphasis which the Scriptures place upon the absolute supernaturalness of revelation in all its modes alike. In the view of the Scriptures, the completely supernatural character of revelation is in no way lessened by the circumstance that it has been given through the instrumentality of men. They affirm, indeed, with the greatest possible emphasis that the Divine word delivered through men is the pure word of God, diluted with no human admixture whatever.

We have already been led to note that even on the occasion when -Moses is exalted above all other organs of revelation (Num. xii. 6 ff.), in point of dignity and favor, no suggestion whatever is made of any inferiority, in either the directness or the purity of their supernaturalness, attaching to other organs of revelation. There might never afterward arise a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face (Deut. xxxiv. 10). But each of the whole series of prophets raised up by Jehovah that the people might always know His will was to be like Moses in speaking to the people only what Jehovah commanded them (Deut. xviii. 15, 18, 20). In this great promise, securing to Israel the succession of prophets, there is also included a declaration of precisely how Jehovah would communicate His messages not so much to them as through them. "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee," we read (Deut. xviii. 18), "and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." The process of revelation through the prophets was a process by which Jehovah put His words in the mouths of the prophets, and the prophets spoke precisely these words and no others. So the prophets themselves ever asserted. "Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth," explains Jeremiah in his account of how he received his prophecies, "and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jer. i. 9; cf. v. 14; Isa. li. 16; lix. 21; Num. xxii. 35; xxiii. 5, 12, 16). Accordingly, the words "with which" they spoke were not their own but the Lord's: "And he said unto me," records Ezekiel, "Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them" (Ezk. iii. 4). It is a process of nothing other than "dictation" which is thus described (2 S. xiv. 3, 19), though, of course, the question may remain open of the exact processes by which this dictation is accomplished. The fundamental passage which brings the central fact before us in the most vivid manner is, no doubt, the account of the commissioning of Moses and Aaron given in Ex. iv. 10-17; vii. 1-7. Here, in the most express words, Jehovah declares that He who made the mouth can be with it to teach it what to speak, and announces the precise function of a prophet to be that he is "a mouth of God," who speaks not his own but God's words. Accordingly, the Hebrew name for "prophet" (*nābhī*), whatever may be its etymology, means throughout the Scriptures just "spokesman," though not "spokesman" in general, but spokesman by way of eminence, that is, God's spokesman; and the characteristic formula by which a prophetic declaration is announced is:



"The word of Jehovah came to me," or the brief "saith Jehovah" ( *hwyl man, n<sup>o</sup>um Yahweh*). In no case does a prophet put his words forward as his own words. That he is a prophet at all is due not to choice on his own part, but to a call of God, obeyed often with reluctance; and he prophesies or forbears to prophesy, not according to his own will but as the Lord opens and shuts his mouth (Ezk, iii. 26 f.) and creates for him the fruit of the lips (Isa. lvii. 19; cf. vi. 7; l. 4). In contrast with the false prophets, he strenuously asserts that he does not speak out of his own heart ("heart" in Biblical language includes the whole inner man), but all that he proclaims is the pure word of Jehovah.

The fundamental passage does not quite leave the matter, however, with this general declaration. It describes the characteristic manner in which Jehovah communicates His messages to His prophets as through the medium of visions and dreams. Neither visions in the technical sense of that word, nor dreams, appear, however, to have been the customary mode of revelation to the prophets, the record of whose revelations has come down to us. But, on the other hand, there are numerous indications in the record that the universal mode of revelation to them was one which was in some sense a vision, and can be classed only in the category distinctively so called.

The whole nomenclature of prophecy presupposes, indeed, its vision-form. Prophecy is distinctively a word, and what is delivered by the prophets is proclaimed as the "word of Jehovah." That it should be announced by the formula, "Thus saith the Lord," is, therefore, only what we expect; and we are prepared for such a description of its process as: "The Lord Jehovah . . . wakeneth mine ear to hear." He "hath opened mine ear" (Isa. l. 4.5). But this is not the way of speaking of their messages which is most usual in the prophets. Rather is the whole body of prophecy cursorily presented as a thing seen. Isaiah places at the head of his book: "The vision of Isaiah . . . which he saw" (cf. Isa. xxix. 10,11; Ob. ver. 1); and then proceeds to set at the head of subordinate sections the remarkable words, "The word that Isaiah . . . saw" (ii. 1); "the burden [margin "oracle"] . . . which Isaiah . . . did see" (xiii. 1). Similarly there stand at the head of other prophecies: "the words of Amos . . . which he saw" (Am. i. 1); "the word of Jehovah that came to Micah . . . which he saw" (Mic. i. 1); "the oracle which Habakkuk the prophet did see" (Hab. i. 1 margin); and elsewhere such language occurs as this: "the word that Jehovah hath showed me" (Jer. xxxviii. 21); "the prophets have seen . . . oracles" (Lam. ii. 14); "the word of Jehovah came . . . and I looked, and, behold" (Ezk, i. 3,4); "Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing" (Ezk. xiii. 3); "I . . . will look forth to see what he will speak with me, . . . Jehovah . . . said, Write the vision" (Hab. ii. 1 f.). It is an inadequate explanation of such language to suppose it merely a relic of a time when vision was more predominantly the form of revelation. There is no proof that vision in the technical sense ever was more predominantly the form of revelation than in the days of the great writing prophets; and such language; as we have quoted too obviously represents the living point of view of the prophets to admit of the supposition that it was merely conventional on their lips. The prophets, in a word, represent the Divine communications which they received as given to them in some sense in visions.

It is possible, no doubt, to exaggerate the significance of this. It is an exaggeration, for example, to insist that therefore all the Divine communications made to the prophets must have come to them in external appearances and objective speech, addressed to and received by means of the bodily eye and ear. This would be to break down the distinction between manifestation and revelation, and to assimilate the mode of prophetic revelation to that granted to Moses, though these are expressly distinguished (Num. xii. 6-8). It is also an exaggeration to insist that therefore the prophetic state must be conceived as that of strict ecstasy, involving, the complete abeyance of all mental life on the part of the prophet (*amentia*), and possibly also accompanying physical effects. It is quite clear from the records which the prophets themselves give us of their revelations that their intelligence was alert in all stages of their reception of them. The purpose of both these extreme views is the good one of doing full justice to the objectivity

of the revelations vouchsafed to the prophets. If these revelations took place entirely externally to the prophet, who merely stood off and contemplated them, or if they were implanted in the prophets by a process so violent as not only to supersede their mental activity but, for the time being, to annihilate it, it would be quite clear that they came from a source other than the prophets' own minds. It is undoubtedly the fundamental contention of the prophets that the revelations given through them are not their own but wholly God's. The significant language we have just quoted from Ezk. xiii. 3: "Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing," is a typical utterance of their sense of the complete objectivity of their messages. What distinguishes the false prophets is precisely that they "prophesy out of their own heart" (Ezk. xiii. 2-17), or, to draw the antithesis sharply, that "they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of Jehovah" (Jer. xxiii. 16.26; xiv. 14 ). But these extreme views fail to do justice, the one to the equally important fact that the word of God, given through the prophets, comes as the pure and unmixed word of God not merely to, but from, the prophets; and the other to the equally obvious fact that the intelligence of the prophets is alert throughout the whole process of the reception and delivery of the revelation made through them.

That which gives to prophecy as a mode of revelation its place in the category of visions, strictly so called, and dreams, is that it shares with them the distinguishing characteristic which determines the class. In them all alike the movements of the mind are determined by something extraneous to the subject's will, or rather, since we are speaking of supernaturally given dreams and visions, extraneous to the totality of the subject's own psychoses. A power not himself takes possession of his consciousness and determines it according to its will. That power, in the case of the prophets, was fully recognized and energetically asserted to be Jehovah Himself or, to be more specific, the Spirit of Jehovah (1S. x. 6.10; Neh. ix. 30; Zec. vii. 12; Joel ii. 28.20). The prophets were therefore 'men of the Spirit' (Hos. ix. 7). What constituted them prophets was that the Spirit was put upon them (Isa. xlii. 1 ) or poured out on them (Joel ii. 28,29), and they were consequently filled with the Spirit (Mic. iii. 8), or, in another but equivalent locution, that "the hand" of the Lord, or "the power of the hand" of the Lord, was upon them (2K. iii. 15; Ezk. i. 3; iii. 14.22; xxxiii. 22; xxxvii. 1; xl. 1), that is to say, they were under the divine control. This control is represented as complete and compelling, so that, under it, the prophet becomes not the "mover," but the "moved" in the formation of his message. The apostle Peter very purely reflects the prophetic consciousness in his well-known declaration: 'No prophecy of scripture comes of private interpretation; for prophecy was never brought by the will of man; but it was as borne by the Holy Spirit that men spoke from God' (2 Pet. i. 20.21).

What this language of Peter emphasizes - and what is emphasized in the whole account which the prophets give of their own consciousness - is, to speak plainly, the passivity of the prophets with respect to the revelation given through them. This is the significance of the phrase: 'it was as borne by the Holy Spirit that men spoke from God.' To be "borne" ( *fe, rein, phérein* ) is not the same as to be led ( *a;gein, ágein* ), much less to be guided or directed ( *o` dhgei/n, hodēgein* ) : he that is "borne" contributes nothing, to the movement induced, but is the object to be moved. The term "passivity" is, perhaps, however, liable to some misapprehension, and should not be overstrained. It is not intended to deny that the intelligence of the prophets was active in the reception of their message; it was by means of their active intelligence that their message was received: their intelligence was the instrument of revelation. It is intended to deny only that their intelligence was active in the production of their message: that it was creatively as distinguished from receptively active. For reception itself is a kind of activity. What the prophets are solicitous that their readers shall understand is that they are in no sense co-authors with God of their messages. Their messages are given them, given them entire, and given them precisely as they are given out by them. God speaks through them: they are not merely His messengers, but "His mouth." But at the same time their intelligence is active in the reception, retention and announcing of their messages, contributing nothing to them but presenting fit instruments for

the communication of them - instruments capable of understanding, responding profoundly to and zealously proclaiming them.

There is, no doubt, a not unnatural hesitancy abroad in thinking of the prophets as exhibiting only such merely receptive activities. In the interests of their personalities, we are asked not to represent God as dealing mechanically with them, pouring His revelations into their souls to be simply received as in so many buckets, or violently wresting their minds from their own proper action that He may do His own thinking with them. Must we not rather suppose, we are asked, that all revelations must be "psychologically mediated," must be given "after the mode of moral mediation," and must be made first of all their recipients' "own spiritual possession"? And is not, in point of fact, the personality of each prophet clearly traceable in his message, and that to such an extent as to compel us to recognize him as in a true sense its real author? The plausibility of such questionings should not be permitted to obscure the fact that the mode of the communication of the prophetic messages which is suggested by them is directly contradicted by the prophets' own representations of their relations to the revealing Spirit. In the prophets' own view they were just instruments through whom God gave revelations which came, from them, not as their own product, but as the pure word of Jehovah. Neither should the plausibility of such questionings blind us to their speciousness. They exploit subordinate considerations, which are not without their validity in their own place and under their own limiting conditions, as if they were the determining or even the sole considerations in the case, and in neglect of the really determining considerations. God is Himself the author of the instruments He employs for the communication of His messages to men and has framed them into precisely the instruments He desired for the exact communication of His message. There is just ground for the expectation that He will use all the instruments He employs according to their natures; intelligent beings therefore as intelligent beings, moral agents as moral agents. But there is no just ground for, asserting that God is incapable of employing the intelligent beings He has Himself created and formed to His will, to proclaim His messages purely as He gives them to them; or of making truly the possession of rational minds conceptions which they have themselves had no part in creating. And there is no ground for imagining that God is unable to frame His own message in the language of the organs of His revelation without its thereby ceasing to be, because expressed in a fashion natural to these organs, therefore purely His message. One would suppose it to lie in the very nature of the case that if the Lord makes any revelation to men, He would do it in the language of men; or, to individualize more explicitly, in the language of the man He employs as the organ of His revelation; and that naturally means, not the language of his nation or circle merely, but his own particular language, inclusive of all that gives individuality to his self-expression. We may speak of this, if we will, as "the accommodation of the revealing God to the several prophetic individualities." But we should avoid thinking of it, externally and therefore mechanically, as if the revealing Spirit artificially phrased the message which He gives through each prophet in the particular forms of speech proper to the individuality of each, so as to create the illusion that the message comes out of the heart of the prophet himself. Precisely what the prophets affirm is that their messages do not come out of their own hearts and do not represent the workings of their own spirits. Nor is there any illusion in the phenomenon we are contemplating; and it is a much more intimate, and, we may add, a much more interesting phenomenon than an external "accommodation" of speech to individual habitudes. It includes, on the one hand, the "accommodation" of the prophet, through his total preparation, to the speech in which the revelation to be given through him is to be clothed; and on the other involves little more than the consistent carrying into detail of the broad principle that God uses the instruments He employs in accordance with their natures.

No doubt, on adequate occasion, the very stones might cry out by the power of God, and dumb beasts speak, and mysterious voices sound forth from the void; and there have not been lacking instances in which men have been compelled by the same power to speak what they would not, and in languages whose very sounds were strange to their ears. But ordinarily when God the Lord

would speak to men He avails Himself of the services of a human tongue with which to speak, and He employs this tongue according to its nature as a tongue and according to the particular nature of the tongue which He employs. It is vain to say that the message delivered through the instrumentality of this tongue is conditioned at least in its form by the tongue by which it is spoken, if not, indeed, limited, curtailed, in some degree determined even in its matter, by it. Not only was it God the Lord who made the tongue, and who made this particular tongue with all its peculiarities, not without regard to the message He would deliver through it; but His control of it is perfect and complete, and it is as absurd to say that He cannot. speak His message by it purely without that message suffering change from the peculiarities of its tone and modes of enunciation, as it would be to say that no new truth can be announced in any language because the elements of speech by the combination of which the truth in question is announced are already in existence with their fixed range of connotation. The marks of the several individualities imprinted on the messages of the prophets, in other words, are only a part of the general fact that these messages are couched in human language, and in no way beyond that general fact affect their purity as direct communications from God.

A new set of problems is raised by the mode of revelation which we have called "concurvive operation." This mode of revelation differs from prophecy, properly so called, precisely by the employment in it, as is not done in prophecy, of the total personality of the organ of revelation, as a factor. It has been common to speak of the mode of the Spirit's action in this form of revelation, therefore, as an assistance, a superintendence, a direction, a control, the meaning being that the effect aimed at - the discovery and enunciation of Divine truth - is attained through the action of the human powers - historical research, logical reasoning, ethical thought, religious aspiration - acting not by themselves, however, but under the prevailing assistance, superintendence, direction, control of the Divine Spirit. This manner of speaking has the advantage of setting this mode of revelation sharply in contrast with prophetic revelation, as involving merely a determining, and not, as in prophetic revelation, a supercessive action of the revealing Spirit. We are warned, however, against pressing this discrimination too far by the inclusion of the whole body of Scripture in such passages as 2 Pet. i. 20 f. in the category of prophecy, and the assignment of their origin not to a mere "leading" but to the "bearing" of the Holy Spirit. In any event such terms as assistance, superintendence, direction, control, inadequately express the nature of the Spirit's action in revelation by "concurvive operation." The Spirit is not to be conceived as standing outside of the human powers employed for the effect in view, ready to supplement any inadequacies they may show and to supply any defects they may manifest, but as working confluently in, with and by them, elevating them, directing them, controlling them, energizing them, so that, as His instruments, they rise above themselves and under His inspiration do His work and reach His aim. The product, therefore, which is attained by their means is His product through them. It is this fact which gives to the process the right to be called actively, and to the product the right to be called passively, a revelation. Although the circumstance that what is done is done by and through the action of human powers keeps the product in form and quality in a true sense human, yet the confluent operation of the Holy Spirit throughout the whole process raises the result above what could by any possibility be achieved by mere human powers and constitutes it expressly a supernatural product. The human traits are traceable throughout its whole extent, but at bottom it is a Divine gift, and the language of Paul is the most proper mode of speech that could be applied to it: "Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (1 Cor. ii. 13); "The things which I write unto you . . . are the commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor. xiv. 37).

It is supposed that all the forms of special or redemptive revelation which underlie and give its content to the religion of the Bible may without violence be subsumed under one or another of these three modes - external manifestation, internal suggestion, and concurvive operation. All, that is, except the culminating revelation, not through, but in, Jesus Christ. As in His person, in

which dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, He rises above all classification and is *sui generis*; so the revelation accumulated in Him stands outside all the divers portions and divers manners in which otherwise revelation has been given and stuns up in itself all that has been or can be made known of God and of His redemption. He does not so much make a revelation of God as Himself is the revelation of God; He does not merely disclose God's purpose of redemption, He is unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. The theophanies are but faint shadows in comparison with His manifestation of God in the flesh. The prophets could prophesy only as the Spirit of Christ which was in them testified, revealing to them as to servants one or another of the secrets of the Lord Jehovah; from Him as His Son, Jehovah has no secrets, but whatsoever the Father knows that the Son knows also. Whatever truth men have been made partakers of by the Spirit of truth is His (for all things whatsoever the Father hath are His) and is taken by the Spirit of truth and declared to men that He may be glorified. Nevertheless, though all revelation is thus summed up in Him, we should not fail to note very carefully that it would also be all sealed up in Him - so little is revelation conveyed by fact alone, without the word - had it not been thus taken by the Spirit of truth and declared unto men. The entirety of the New Testament is but the explanatory word accompanying and giving its effect to the fact of Christ. And when this fact was in all its meaning made the possession of men, revelation was completed and in that sense ceased. Jesus Christ is no less the end of revelation than He is the end of the law.

#### IV. Biblical Terminology

There is not much additional to be learned concerning the nature and processes of revelation, from the terms currently employed in Scripture to express the idea. These terms are ordinarily the common words for disclosing, making known, making manifest, applied with more or less heightened significance to supernatural acts or effects in kind. In the English Bible (AV) the verb "reveal" occurs about fifty-one times, of which twenty-two are in the Old Testament and twenty-nine in the New Testament. In the Old Testament the word is always the rendering of a Hebrew term h'l'G', *gālāh*, or its Aramaic equivalent h'l'G>, *gēlāh*, the root meaning of which appears to be "nakedness." When applied to revelation, it seems to hint at the removal of obstacles to perception or the uncovering of objects to perception. In the New Testament the word "reveal" is always (with the single exception of Lk. ii. 35) the rendering of a Greek term *avpokalu,ptw*, *apokalúptō* (but in 2 Thess. i. 7; 1 Pet. iv. 13 the corresponding noun *avpoka,luyij*, *apokálupsis*), which has a very similar basal significance with its Hebrew parallel. As this Hebrew word formed no substantive in this sense, the noun "revelation" does not occur in the English Old Testament, the idea being expressed, however, by other Hebrew terms variously rendered. It occurs in the English New Testament, on the other hand, about a dozen times, and always as the rendering of the substantive corresponding to the verb rendered "reveal" (*apokálupsis*). On the face of the English Bible, the terms "reveal," "revelation" bear therefore uniformly the general sense of "disclose," "disclosure." The idea is found in the Bible, however, much more frequently than the terms "reveal," "revelation" in English versions. Indeed, the Hebrew and Greek terms exclusively so rendered occur more frequently in this sense than in this rendering in the English Bible. And by their side there stand various other terms which express in one way or another the general conception.

In the New Testament the verb *fanero,w*, *phanerōō*, with the general sense of making manifest, manifesting, is the most common of these. It differs from *apokalúptō* the more general and external term from the more special and inward. Other terms also are occasionally used: *evpifa,neia*, *epipháneia*, "manifestation" (2 Thess. ii. 8; 1 Tim. vi. 14; 2 Tim. i. 10; iv. 1; Tit. ii. 13; cf. *evpifai,nw*, *epiphainō*, Tit. ii. 11; iii. 4); *deiknu,w*, *deiknúō* (Rev. i. 1; xvii. 1; xxii. 1.6.8; cf. Acts ix. 16; 1 Tim. iv. 15); *evxhge,omai*, *exēgéomai* (Jn. i. 18), of which, however, only one perhaps -

crhmati,zw, *chrēmátízō* (Mt. ii. 12.22; Lk. ii. 26; Acts x. 22; Heb. viii. 5; xi. 7; xii. 25); crhmatismo,j, *chrēmátismós* (Rom. xi. 4) - calls for particular notice as in a special way, according to its usage, expressing the idea of a Divine communication.

In the Old Testament, the common Hebrew verb for "seeing" (ha'r', *rā'āh*) is used in as appropriate stems, with God as the subject, for "appearing." "showing": "the Lord appeared unto . . ."; "the word which the Lord showed me." And from this verb not only is an active substantive formed which supplied the more ancient designation of the official organ or revelation: haero, *rō'eh*, "seer"; but also objective substantives, ha'r>m;, *mar'āh*, and ha<r>m;, *mar'eh* which were used to designate the thing seen in a revelation - the "vision." By the side of these terms there were others in use, derived from a root which supplies to the Aramaic its common word for "seeing," but in Hebrew has a somewhat more pregnant meaning, hw'x', *hāzāh*. Its active derivative, hw,xo, *hōzeh*, was a designation of a prophet which remained in occasional use, alternating with the more customary aybin', *nābhī*, long after ha'ro, *rō'eh*, had become practically obsolete; and its passive derivatives *hāzōn*, *hizzāyōn*, *hāzūth*, *maḥāzeh* provided the ordinary terms for the substance of the revelation or "vision." The distinction between the two sets of terms, derived respectively from *rā'āh* and *hāzāh*, while not to be unduly pressed, seems to lie in the direction that the former suggests external manifestations and the latter internal revelations. The *rō'eh* is he to whom Divine manifestations, the *hōzeh* he to whom Divine communications, have been vouchsafed; the *mar'eh* is an appearance, the *hāzōn* and its companions a vision. It may be of interest to observe that *mar'āh* is the term employed in Num. xii. 6, while it is *hāzōn* which commonly occurs in the headings of the written prophecies to indicate their revelatory character. From this it may possibly be inferred that in the former passage it is the mode, in the latter the contents of the revelation that is emphasized. Perhaps a like distinction may be traced between the *hāzōn* of Dan. viii. 15 and the *mar'eh* of the next verse. The ordinary verb for "knowing," [d;y], *yādha'*, expressing in its causative stems the idea of making known, informing, is also very naturally employed, with God as its subject, in the sense of revealing, and that, in accordance with the natural sense of the word, with a tendency to pregnancy of implication, of revealing effectively, of not merely uncovering to observation, but making to know. Accordingly, it is paralleled not merely with hl'G", *gālāh* (Ps. xcvi. 2: 'The Lord hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he displayed in the sight of the nation'), but also with such terms as dm;l', *lāmadh* (Ps. xxv. 4: 'Make known to me thy ways, O Lord: teach me thy paths'). This verb *yādha'* forms no substantive in the sense of "revelation" (cf. t[D;], *da'ath*, Num. xxiv. 16; Ps. xix, 3).

The most common vehicles of the idea of "revelation" in the Old Testament are, however, two expressions which are yet to be mentioned. These are the phrase, "word of Jehovah." and the term commonly but inadequately rendered in the English versions by "law." The former (*d'ḥar Yahweh* varied to *d'ḥar 'Ēlōhīm* or *d'ḥar hā-'Ēlōhīm*; cf. *r'um Yahweh*, *massa*, *Yahweh*) occurs scores of times and is at once the simplest and the most colorless designation of a Divine communication. By the latter (*tōrāh*), the proper meaning of which is "instruction," a strong implication of authoritativeness is conveyed; and, in this sense, it becomes what may be called the technical designation of a specifically Divine communication. The two are not infrequently brought together, as in Isa. i. 10: "Hear the word of Jehovah, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law [margin "teaching"] of our God, ye people of Gomorrah"; or Isa. ii. 3; Mic. iv. 2; "For out of Zion shall go forth the law [margin "instruction"], and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem." Both terms are used for any Divine communication of whatever extent; and both came to be employed to express the entire body of Divine revelation, conceived as a unitary whole. In this comprehensive usage, the emphasis of the one came to fall more on the graciousness, and of the other more on the authoritativeness of this body of Divine revelation; and both passed into the New Testament with these implications. "The word of God," or simply "the word," comes thus to mean in the New Testament just the gospel, "the word of the proclamation of redemption, that is, all that which God has to say to man, and causes to be said" looking to his

salvation. It expresses, in a word, precisely what we technically speak of as God's redemptive revelation. "The law," on the other hand, means in this New Testament use, just the whole body of the authoritative instruction which God has given men. It expresses, in other words, what we commonly speak of as God's supernatural revelation. The two things, of course, are the same: God's authoritative revelation is His gracious revelation; God's redemptive revelation is His supernatural revelation. The two terms merely look at the one aggregate of revelation from two aspects, and each emphasizes its own aspect of this one aggregated revelation.

Now, this aggregated revelation lay before the men of the New Testament in a written form, and it was impossible to speak freely of it without consciousness of and at least occasional reference to its written form. Accordingly we hear of a Word of God that is written (Jn. xv. 25; 1 Cor. xv. 54), and the Divine Word is naturally contrasted with mere tradition, as if its written form were of its very idea (Mk. vii. 10); indeed, the written body of revelation - with an emphasis on its written form - is designated expressly 'the prophetic word' (2 Pet. i. 19). More distinctly still, "the Law" comes to be thought of as a written, not exactly, code, but body of Divinely authoritative instructions. The phrase, "It is written in your law" (Jn. x. 34; xv. 25; Rom. iii. 19; 1 Cor. xiv. 21), acquires the precise sense of, "It is set forth in your authoritative Scriptures, all the content of which is 'law,' that is, Divine instruction." Thus "the Word of God," "the Law," came to mean just the written body of revelation, what we call, and what the New Testament writers called, in the same high sense which we give the term, "the Scriptures." These "Scriptures" are thus identified with the revelation of God, conceived as a well-defined corpus, and two conceptions rise before us which have had a determining part to play in the history of Christianity - the conception of an authoritative Canon of Scripture, and the conception of this Canon of Scripture as just the Word of God written. The former conception was thrown into prominence in opposition to the gnostic heresies in the earliest age of the church, and gave rise to a richly varied mode of speech concerning the Scriptures, emphasizing their authority in legal language, which goes back to and rests on the Biblical usage of "Law." The latter it was left to the Reformation to do justice to in its struggle against, on the one side, the Romish depression of the Scriptures in favor of the traditions of the church, and on the other side the Enthusiasts' supercession of them in the interests of the "inner Word." When Tertullian, on the one hand, speaks of the Scriptures as an "Instrument," a legal document, his terminology has an express warrant in the Scriptures' own usage of *tōrāh*, "law," to designate their entire content. And when John Gerhard argues that "between the Word of God and Sacred Scripture, taken in a material sense, there is no real difference," he is only declaring plainly what is definitely implied in the New Testament use of "the Word of God" with the written revelation in mind. What is important to recognize is that the Scriptures themselves represent the Scriptures as not merely containing here and there the record of revelations - "words of God," *tōrōth* - given by God, but as themselves, in all their extent, a revelation, an authoritative body of gracious instructions from God; or, since they alone, of all the revelations which God may have given, are extant - rather as the Revelation, the only "Word of God" accessible to men, in all their parts "law." that is, authoritative instruction from God.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>. Originally published as "Revelation," from *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, James Orr, General Editor, v. 4, pp. 2573-2582. Pub. Chicago, 1915, by the Howard-Severance Co.

2. Marked up by Lance George Marshall.

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Revelation, Academic, B. B. Warfield