

REVELATION FROM GOD

WHY IS A REVELATION NECESSARY?

MAN ON EARTH is placed in a paradoxical situation. Endowed with intelligence and logic, he seems intended to know the reason for his existence and the meaning of it, as well as the origin of the universe and the person of his Creator.

Actually, however, he finds himself surrounded by mysteries. Left to his own devices, he is incapable of answering the questions which press in on him so closely: From whence has he come? Why is he the victim of suffering and death? Will he ever find happiness and peace? What will occur after death: annihilation, judgment or eternal life? And above all towers this question: Does God exist? Then, if He does, why is He so far from us; and how can we manage to have an encounter with Him?

All religions and theologies testify to man's indefatigable efforts to ferret out the truth and to find out about God. It must, however, be acknowledged that the results of this search have been deceptive and even tragic. How many imperfect gods, created in the image of man, and how many complicated systems, often absurd, have come into being as a result, each in turn setting aside the others! Modern science itself, of which we are so proud, does not help us solve the enigma behind the universe; and certain astronauts who have gone into outer space have naïvely protested that they did not "find anybody" there.

In order for man to come to any true understanding, he must have a revelation from above, chiefly for the following two reasons.

1. *God is, by definition, inaccessible to the creature.* His omnipotence, eternity and absolute perfection are by their very essence inconceivable to our limited minds. Has He Himself not said, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55:9)? "The

blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords . . . dwelling in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (I Tim. 6:15-16). Thus the prophet cries out: "Thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isa. 45:15). It is evident, moreover, that for man to conceive of the Supreme Being in His absolute nature, he would have to be God Himself!

But the Lord takes pleasure in revealing Himself. He made man in His image, so as to have creatures who could respond to Him, beings who could love and glorify Him. In Eden Adam enjoyed the immediate presence of God and lived in happy fellowship with Him. Since God's "delight was with the sons of men" (Prov. 8:31), this marvelous state could have simply continued on into the realm of eternal perfection.

2. *By the fall, man broke the contact with God.* After he was driven out of paradise, his condition thenceforth was one of spiritual death (Gen. 2:17; 3:24; Eph. 2:1, 5) and of blindness. He "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (I Cor. 2:14). "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ . . . should not dawn upon them" (II Cor. 4:4). The sinner, the unregenerate man, cannot see the kingdom of God or enter into it. To enter the kingdom, one must be born again, appropriating truths revealed from above. Indeed, these are the "things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him. But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit" (I Cor. 2:9-10).

CAN GOD REVEAL HIMSELF TO MAN, OR DOES HE EVEN WISH TO DO SO?

Does the possibility of a revelation from God exist? Some philosophers have denied such a possibility, saying, "How could the Infinite communicate with the finite, the Creator with the creature? Is absolute truth expressible in the relative terms of human language?"

But do we not see, as an everyday occurrence, a father instructing his son word by word, adapting his thought and vocabulary to the child's comprehension? Likewise, a traveler describes the unknown by beginning in terms of the known. God acts thus when He con-

descends to where we are in order to communicate His truth to us in an intelligible manner. "The opening of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps. 119:130).

Let us emphasize one very important fact: revelation is of necessity an act of God. The intimate thoughts of a man can be disclosed only by the man himself (I Cor. 2:11). Even so, and in a far deeper sense, no one but the Spirit of God can make us understand the mysteries of the Deity. We have just observed that if man could sound out these mysteries all by himself and explain them, he would be equal with God. The thoughts of the Lord infinitely surpass ours. Irenaeus rightly said, "The Lord taught us that no one can know God unless God Himself be the teacher; that is, without God, God cannot be known."¹ In claiming to doubt the possibility of revelation, the agnostic holds up to question two things: the capacity of God to reveal Himself and the capacity of man to know God.

The first of these suggestions amounts practically to the denial of God, for the idea of a divine revelation is tied in with that of the very existence of the Lord. Indeed, if He exists, it is to be expected that He would reveal Himself—and this even in a supernatural and infallible way. Any man wants to communicate with his child. So would not God desire to come into contact with the beings He created in His image, beings capable of communing with Him on a moral, an intellectual, and a spiritual plane? And if He speaks, what will He get across to them unless it is the message of truth and of love which emanates from His very nature? The faraway god of the deists, silent and indifferent to his creatures, is no perfect god: in him the greatest of perfections is missing—that of love; thus in no way does he merit the name of God.

What can we say about man's inability to perceive the voice of God? To admit such inability would be the same as to deny God Himself. After having given man an ear to hear the subtle or the discordant noises of earth, and after having also put into his heart the thought of eternity and a longing for it, would He have failed to make him recognize the voice from heaven? Such a powerless god as this would not even be able to capture our attention. The whole Bible demonstrates, on the contrary, that the Lord does address Himself to us and that our greatest felicity is to hear Him: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for Jehovah hath spoken" (Isa. 1:2).

Humanity cannot live apart from the work of its Creator, and fallen man is saved only by a revelation from the Almighty: "This is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3).

WHAT UNIVERSAL REVELATIONS DO MEN RECEIVE?

The God of power and love desires to make Himself known and to be loved by His creatures. So He manifests Himself to them and descends to the level of their comprehension. Even before the fall, He gave two particularly eloquent revelations of His person and His attributes.

1. *The revelation of God in nature.* According to Paul, "that which is known of God is manifest in them [men, including the idolatrous heathen]; for God manifested it unto them. For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity; that they may be without excuse: because that, knowing God, they glorified him not as God, neither gave thanks" (Rom. 1:19-21). The psalmist cries out: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Ps. 19:1).

Such a striking natural revelation as this leads every sincere man to feel his own littleness in view of the creation and its Author: "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, . . . what is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:3-4). "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span? . . . Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the small dust of the balance" (Isa. 40:12-15).

At the same time we perceive the omnipotence, wisdom, providential love and eternity of the Creator of all things. "A living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways. And yet he left not himself without witness, in that he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:15-17). This same God has determined that all men "should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him, though he is not far from each one of us: for in him we live, and move, and have our being" (17:27-28). One would have to be blind or would have to

blind himself voluntarily to deny evidence like this. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. 14:1). Indeed it is only a fool who can claim that the world came into being all by itself. Even Voltaire said, "The world poses a problem for me, and I cannot suppose that this clock exists without there having been a clock-maker."

The following summarizes what P. E. Hughes has to say on this subject:

The scientist proceeds from the a priori position that the universe and nature are coherent and that the discovery of one "law" will logically lead to another. Science cannot be science unless nature is a coordinated whole, a universe, not a chaotic set of facts isolated, independent and meaningless. The scholar knows that established facts will lead him somewhere. Such knowledge is inherent in the heart of man. He knows that he himself was created and that the world follows a plan and a purpose determined by God. To reject that interior, innate conviction is for him to refuse to know himself. To acknowledge that the world is the handiwork of God is normal for the one who has been created in His image.

We have just observed that the revelation of these great truths is clearly seen in creation (Ps. 19:1-4) and that everything around speaks to us of it. Still, it is this same ever-present revelation which fallen men refuse to accept. Blinded by sin, they refuse truth. "Knowing God, they glorified him not as God . . . but became vain in their reasonings. . . . Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:21-22). Obsessed by human wisdom and philosophy, men devote their intellectual and spiritual energy to an interminable "search for truth," regardless of the fact that it has always been right in front of their eyes, as plain as day. Man has literally "exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator" (v. 25). This attitude characterizes not only the idolatry of primitive paganism, but also every humanistic culture.

The fundamental contradiction at the heart of all the thinking of unregenerate man is basically this: next to the rational principle indispensable to any logical reasoning, man has introduced an irrational principle. He knows the truth regarding the eternal power of the divine Creator and regarding the order in creation established according to His will—a truth which alone makes possible any ra-

tional, scientific understanding of the world. But at the same time he irrationally suppresses this truth. Not willing for God to govern him, he prefers to interpret the facts of the universe in terms of an egocentric philosophy rather than a theocentric one, glorifying man rather than God. Because of this false logic in the depths of his being, his highest faculties are, as it were, paralyzed. From this comes the failure of all human systems of philosophy, however impressive they may appear. "Based on a contradiction, they are destined to fragility; and they destroy one another."²

Let us, however, bring out the fact that, especially since the fall, the revelation given in nature is insufficient. It does allow us a glimpse of the power, providence and eternity of God; but it fails to present clearly His person, His holiness, His righteousness and—above all—His redeeming love and everlasting purposes for us. One recognizes this in looking at the confused and contradictory conclusions arrived at from the revelation in nature by the ancient Babylonians, Egyptians and Romans, as well as by Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists and even the western humanists and rationalists. It is indispensable then that humanity be given some entirely different kinds of illumination.

2. *The voice of God in conscience.* To nature, outside of mankind, God adds another way of speaking, by addressing Himself to the conscience. Paul says, "(When Gentiles that have not the law [written by God] do by nature the things of the law, these, not having the law, are the law unto themselves; in that they show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness therewith, and their thoughts one with another accusing or else excusing them); in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, according to my gospel, by Jesus Christ" (Rom. 2:14-16).

In creating man in His image, God endowed him with a moral and a spiritual sense. The great principles of the divine law are imprinted on his heart: appreciation for the excellence of that which is good, and joy in accomplishing it; also knowledge of the evil that is opposed to the divine will, and a feeling of guilt, desire for justification, and responsibility before the Creator. Obviously one can distort and silence his conscience. An individual, or a people, can stray far away from these great principles. However, even involuntarily, some trace

of them always makes itself felt. The conscience of a child not hardened by life reacts in the most lively way. He will quite naturally have the feeling of sin, even if it is only a question of minor disobedience, thefts or lies of relative importance. It is for this same reason that people the world over are haunted by the need of expiation. In one way or another, human religions express the guilt of man who has offended divinity. Very rare are those which do not set forth the bleeding sacrifice of a victim slain in the place of the guilty one. We believe, moreover, that the universal concept that "without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness" did not simply surge up out of the conscience of man. It was the object of a primitive revelation, which was granted to the first men after the fall: the nakedness of Adam and Eve was covered by skins of animals, which doubtless were put to death expressly for this (cf. Gen. 3:21; 1:29). Abel was justified by the sacrifice of the firstborn of his flock and of the fat of it (Gen. 4:4; Heb. 11:4). Noah, after going out from the ark, offered sacrifices to God (Gen. 8:20-21).

Ideally, any man instructed by the twin revelations of nature and of conscience ought to be ready to receive salvation. Realizing his littleness and the marvelous grandeur of the universe, he worships the invisible Creator. At the same time, he trembles before Him, for his conscience accuses him, since no one on earth has ever obeyed all its injunctions. More or less directly he seeks for a redemption. If he wants to accomplish it himself, he will become adept at one of the innumerable human religions, all of which propose a salvation of man by man. If, convicted by the Spirit of God, he recognizes his absolute inability to get rid of the evil he has committed and to accomplish the good required, he will accept with comfort and gratitude the announcement of the Saviour that fills the whole Bible, which is God's written revelation. We have the example of this attitude on the part of heathen, such as the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:27-28) and the centurion Cornelius (10:1-48). On every mission field there have sometimes been such reactions on the part of choice souls after they have heard the gospel for the first time. Unfortunately such cases have been only very rare exceptions. The immense majority of men do not pay the attention that they should to the two great voices of nature and conscience. The so-called primitive

heathen turn away from the Creator to worship false gods, idols, fetishes and even animals. Modern, civilized pagans worship themselves and proudly exalt man, in every aspect, preparing for the acclamation of the superman, who will be the Antichrist (Rom. 1:21-25; II Thess. 2:3-4). Having lost their good conscience, they are afraid of the true God; and they have become shipwrecked concerning the faith (I Tim. 1:19). This is why the Apostle Paul declares them inexcusable (Rom. 1:20); they are lost and are subject to the terrible judgment of the Lord. Still He loves them and sent His Son into the world on purpose to snatch them from such a perdition. To make us know His redeeming love, God had to give us a third revelation, that of the Scriptures, which revelation makes the theme of the study before us.

Can a heathen who has received only the revelations of nature and of conscience come to salvation?⁸ Paul expressly declares that everyone will be judged according to the light which he has received: "As many as have sinned without the law shall also perish without the law: and as many as have sinned under the law shall be judged by the law" (Rom. 2:12). We have seen that the revelations of nature and of conscience are sufficient to produce, on the part of the heathen, both worship and repentance and the full responsibility for both. However, God, who is just and omniscient, knows perfectly whether a sincere yet ignorant man, given a chance to accept salvation, would take it or not. Christ died for the sins of the whole world, those committed before His coming as well as those in times and places not yet reached by the gospel (cf. Rom. 3:25). The Lord, then, will know how to treat every sinner according to His love and His righteousness.

This does not exempt us, who are the recipients of all this divine light, from making it known to every creature. As a matter of fact, in view of the horrible darkness with which their lives are surrounded, how many "sincere heathen" are there? Their bodies are defiled, their consciences perverted, and their hearts captivated by evil spirits. Let us have pity on their sufferings and their spiritual abandonment; and let us hasten to take to them the Bible, the marvelous message of the Saviour. How shall we escape if we neglect to transmit to them this so-great salvation?

CAN REASON BE AN INDEPENDENT MEANS OF ARRIVING AT THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD?

Is not reason a wonderful gift granted to man, this faculty that permits him to judge everything—to put a correct value on everything? Having nature all around him and the voice of conscience within him, can he not, without any other revelation, arrive by reason at a complete understanding? Many do esteem man perfectly capable of perceiving all the truths essential to his life, both earthly and heavenly, without any supernatural help. On the other hand, in our country it is difficult to dissociate reason entirely from revelation, for elements of revelation have penetrated right to the marrow of our so-called "Christian" civilization. In reality, if one were to disregard the universal revelations already cited (creation and conscience), a glance at the peoples and individuals limited to the light from them would suffice for a deplorable demonstration of the limitations of both human nature and human perception.

As just noted, man, separated from God by the fall, is wholly contaminated by evil. No longer is he that perfect creature made in the image of God. His heart is capable of harboring shocking feelings, his will is weak and rebellious, and his defiled body is every day steadily approaching the grave. Likewise his mind, still capable of fine reasoning, is at once twisted and fallible. Paul said of the very refined pagans of his day what is also true of those in our day: They "became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:21-22). The natural man (*animal*, that is, unregenerate) "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged." The spiritual man, on the other hand, receives by revelation the very thought of Christ (I Cor. 2:14-15). The apostle, therefore, is not much impressed by human wisdom, which he charges with foolishness (1:19-20). He goes so far as to say: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5). "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world,

and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). Does not such a declaration oblige us to rethink, from a biblical point of view, the so-called Christian theology which is mingled with such a multitude of philosophical and intellectualistic elements?

It is clear, at any rate, that in view of the insufficiency of nature, conscience and reason, the only way to a personal and true knowledge of God is the revelation which He by His Spirit freely grants us.

WHAT HAVE BEEN THE METHODS AND STAGES OF THE REVELATION SINCE THE FALL?

Immediately after the disobedience of our first parents, the Lord set in motion the realization of His plan of salvation. According to the Bible, man is not seeking the true God (Rom. 3:11). All the initiative comes from the Lord, who is indefatigably seeking His lost sheep. Since "this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (John 17:3), He availed Himself of every means to communicate to man. He gave man not only His blessings, but also His very person. "His divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him" (II Peter 1:3). Such a great undertaking, of course, had to be accomplished in a progressive and varied way. These are the principal stages of it:

1. *The theophanies* (appearances of the Deity) occur frequently in the early books of the Bible. God appeared directly, or in the guise of the Angel of the Lord, for example:

- to Abraham (Gen. 17:1, 22; 18:1, etc.)
- to Isaac (Gen. 26:2)
- to Jacob (Gen. 32:30)
- to Moses (Exodus 3:2-6; 33:11)
- to Gideon (Judges 6:12, 14-18, etc.)

One might ask oneself whether this Angel of the Lord, identified with God, was not the anticipated but temporary manifestation of Jesus Christ Himself. No one but the only begotten Son can make God known (John 1:18). According to Exodus 23:21, the Lord said of that Angel, different from all the others: "My name is in him." It was the same One who spoke with Moses on Sinai (Acts 7:38) and who saved Israel from all her distresses (Isa. 63:9).

2. *Dreams and visions* (Num. 12:6) granted, for example,

- to Jacob (Gen. 28:12-16)
- to Solomon (I Kings 3:5-15)
- to Daniel (Dan. 2:19, 28; 7:1; 10:7-8)
- to Joseph, the "husband" of Mary (Matt. 1:20; 2:13), etc.

3. *Direct contacts* established without mention of a particular appearance. God came to Balaam (or went before Balaam, Num. 22:9; 23:4). The Lord spoke with Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11).

4. *Miracles and signs* drew man's attention and demonstrated to him the power, the holiness, the presence and the acts of the sovereign God in

- the judgment of the flood and the salvation of Noah (Gen. 6-9)
- the destruction of Sodom and the preservation of Lot (Gen. 19)
- the burning bush, the plagues of Egypt, the column of cloud, the deliverance of Israel (Exodus 3-15)
- the miracles of the desert (Numbers) and the entrance into Palestine (Joshua), etc.

The farther one goes in the Old Testament, the more the revelation becomes spiritual and inner. (We find the same progression as we pass from the period of the Gospels and the beginning of the Acts into that of the Epistles.)

5. *The prophets*. God, having revealed Himself to individuals chosen for His service, sends them to make known to the people what they have heard. He does not, therefore, speak so much *to* the prophet as *by* the prophet. In the Hebrew, moreover, the word *nabhi* (prophet) means a "forth-teller."

The first of these great messengers was Moses, the revealer of the law. In the beginning he declared that he was unworthy and unable to accomplish such a task; but God answered him: "Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh a man? . . . is it not I, Jehovah? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth and teach thee what thou shalt speak" (Exodus 4:11-12).

Visions and words are often confused. The book of Amos begins like this: "The words of Amos, . . . which he saw concerning Israel" (1:1). A prophet was formerly called a seer (I Sam. 9:9); and the

distinguishing mark of false (foolish) prophets was precisely this: they "have seen nothing!" (Ezek. 13:3).

The prophets were obviously under the control of the Spirit of God. It is solely by His enabling that any man can prophesy (Num. 11:25, 29; I Sam. 10:6, 10). Speaking of God's appeals to Israel, Nehemiah said: "Yet many years didst thou bear with them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit through thy prophets: yet would they not give ear" (9:30; cf. Zech. 7:12). Ezekiel declared that the hand of the Lord was upon him, that it was "strong" upon him, that the Spirit lifted him up and took him away, that He entered into him and set him upon his feet (1:3; 3:14, 22, 24). Micah said that he was filled with power by the Spirit of the Lord, to deliver his redoubtable message (3:8). Peter affirmed that the prophets spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit (II Peter 1:21).

The office of these men took on even more importance in Israel after the rejection of the theocracy and the institution of the kingdom (I Sam. 9:17). God never leaves Himself without a witness, and by means of such a ministry He unceasingly spoke to His people. According to the words of Amos, "the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets" (3:7). The role of these men was also to lay the foundation for the next stage of the revelation: the incarnation and the redemptive work of the Messiah.

6. *The revelation of God in Jesus Christ.* All of the preceding communications were only indirect and fragmentary. They did indeed speak of the true God, but they pictured Him as far away and invisible; rather, they afforded only a quick glance, a glimpse, a communication that was meaningful, even overwhelming, but necessarily incomplete. Isaiah, the most spiritual of the prophets, felt this insufficiency so keenly that he cried out: "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour. O Jehovah, why dost thou make us to err from thy way? Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down!" (45:15; 63:17; 64:1). And the same prophet voiced as follows the response to this heartrending cry on the part of a lost humanity: "Be strong, fear not: behold, your God . . . he will come and save you" (35:4).

Jesus Christ is God incarnate, the eternal Word made flesh. He does not simply bring us a new revelation; He is Himself this revela-

tion. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1:18). "Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). And Christ Himself adds: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). He embodies the sum total of all the divine attributes: omnipotence, absolute holiness, perfect love, omnipresence and omniscience (except as in Matthew 24:36, a case in line no doubt with His voluntary humiliation). He is for us "wisdom . . . , and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption" (I Cor. 1:30), for "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). The theophanies are only a flash of lightning in the night in comparison to the incarnation of the One who is the light of the world.

The prophets gathered up and transcribed one by one the hints of the mysteries which the Lord willed to make known to them. But the Father has no secrets from the Son. The Son is Himself "the mystery of God, . . . in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden" (Col. 2:3). This is why the epistle to the Hebrews sums up thus the history of the revelation: "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers *in the prophets* by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us *in His Son*" (1:1). And more than ever before, in Jesus Christ God's words have been acts: by the sacrifice of the cross, He gave a dazzling demonstration of His love and righteousness by providing there the full expiation of our sins. Then, He kept His promises of eternal life by raising up His Son from among the dead.

Christ, God fully manifested, is therefore not only the end of the law (Rom. 10:4), but also the consummation of the revelation. And He is the very heart of it, since it was His Spirit who inspired all prophecy (I Peter 1:11; Rev. 19:10) and since throughout eternity's day we shall find ourselves in the presence of the "apocalypse": the revelation of Jesus Christ (Rev. 1:1).

7. *The Scriptures.* All the revelations discussed above were accorded to individuals or to generations now passed away. What could we know of the illumination granted, the realities experienced, and the redemption accomplished, had these not been given substantial form by their incorporation into an inspired Book? First of all, the law was drawn up for a people called to receive the oracles

of God. Then the prophets put in writing these words of light and fire. Finally came the message of Christ and of the apostles. We shall subsequently consider the means employed for the reception, preservation and transmission of this divine communication.

Part Two

THE WORD

THE DIVINE WORD

BEFORE COMING TO THE INSPIRATION of the written Word, let us first consider the role played by the Word itself.

THE GOD OF THE BIBLE IS A GOD WHO SPEAKS

From the creation on through the entire history of His people, He reveals Himself by speaking. He spoke, and out of nothing the universe sprang forth (Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, etc.). John declared of Christ, who became incarnate for our salvation, revealing to us the Father: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word became flesh" (1:1, 14). The Lord, who is both light and love (I John 1:5; 4:8), takes pleasure in making Himself known to His creatures. He expresses His nature, His thoughts, His will and His plans. He explains His work, past and present; and He announces His future acts and His ultimate triumph.

Our God does not remain silent like the idols of the heathen, both ancient and modern (I Cor. 12:2). The Bible is full of irony on this point:

"Such as lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance,
 They hire a goldsmith, and he maketh it a god;
 They fall down, yea, they worship.
 They bear it upon the shoulder,
 They carry it, and set it in its place, and it standeth;
 From its place shall it not remove:
 Yea, one may cry unto it, yet can it not answer, nor save him out of his trouble" (Isa. 46:6-7).

He neither answers nor saves! This is descriptive of the false god. On Mount Carmel, the prophets of Baal had been challenged by Elijah to obtain an answer from their god. They "called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But

there was no voice, nor any that answered. . . . At noon . . . Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud; for he is a god: either he is musing, or he is gone aside, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth and must be awaked. . . . But there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded" (I Kings 18:26-29).

Neither has the Lord anything in common with the cold and absent god of the philosophers, who would have left us in the dark without any message on his part. He does not keep silent in indifference, malevolence or powerlessness, since it is His very nature to express Himself. Rather, if He does remain silent, it is because very grave reasons constrain Him to do so. In such a case, His very silence is a terrible judgment.

When Saul, rejected because of repeated disobedience, "inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets" (I Sam. 28:6). In regard to Israel, God said to Jeremiah: "Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their cry" (14:11-12). And He says further: "When ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood" (Isa. 1:15). To the unbelieving, who mock Him, the Lord declares: "Turn you at my reproof . . . I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye have refused . . . I also will laugh in the day of your calamity. . . . Then will they call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they shall not find me" (Prov. 1:23-28).

MAN, GIFTED WITH THE POWER OF SPEECH, CAN COMMUNICATE WITH GOD

Man, created in the image of God, is, like Him, endowed with the ability to express himself. His word is a reply to the divine Word and an echo of it. It is this one factor—language—which establishes a fundamental distinction between man and beast. Of an intelligent and affectionate dog, do we not say "All he lacks is the ability to speak"? Speech is by far the best means of communication between two individuals. By means of the sense of touch, I can caress a person, or I can strike him; but what does that mean in comparison to speech? And how handicapped are they who are deprived of it!

Speech can convey the most subtle shades of thought and feeling. And it does so with a variety which makes bodily sensations seem

primitive and uniform. It is speech which permits the most complete expression of the personality. Thus throughout the world it exerts an incomparably strong influence. Nations are governed by men firm in will and irresistible in word.

In a certain sense speech has more effect than acts themselves; rather, speech is that which provides the true source of conduct. Our thoughts, expressed, communicated by language, are the spring of our behavior. For it is from the heart of man, the inner life, that come good or evil works (Mark 7:21).

One can therefore speak—and this not only concerning God—of the creative power of the Word. "In the beginning was the Word. . . . All things were made through him" (John 1:1-3). This means that God, before anything existed, simply expressed in a word His thought and His will. By speaking, He acted and made Himself known. As for man, he reveals himself also whenever he opens his mouth. This is why "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (Matt. 12:36-37). God could, therefore, not have chosen any better means than this to communicate with us.

THE DIVINE USE OF THE WORD IS VARIED

The eternal Word. The Word, being the expression of God revealing Himself, is eternal in heaven. "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1). "For ever, O Jehovah, thy word is settled in heaven" (Ps. 119:89). In similar vein Jesus, thinking of the ages yet to come, declared: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). "The word of the Lord abideth forever" (I Peter 1:25).

The Word as a creative agent. "God said, Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen. 1:3; the word "said" is repeated eleven times in this chapter). "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear" (Heb. 11:3).

The Word of God in the Old Testament. God spoke constantly to the patriarchs (Gen. 12:1, etc.). At Sinai He simply let the sound of His words be heard; it was only a voice (Deut. 4:12), so that His revelation would remain completely spiritual. The epistle to the

Hebrews sums up like this the entire old covenant: "*God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners . . .*" (1:1). He has certainly wrought many startling works, but the most essential thing is that He has spoken!

The Word incarnate. The whole new covenant, on the other hand, is summed up as follows: "*God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in his Son*" (Heb. 1:1-2). "*The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us*" (John 1:14). Jesus Himself, at the close of His ministry among His disciples, emphasized the main thrust of it this way: "*The words which thou gavest me I have given unto them; and they received them*" (John 17:8).

The Word of the Holy Spirit. Again, this Word is that which taught the disciples after Pentecost: "*The Spirit of truth . . . shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come*" (John 16:13). In reality, throughout the book of Acts, the Spirit did speak to the church: "*The Spirit said to Philip, Go near*" (8:29). "*The Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them*" (13:2). Even the apostles' word is attributed to the Holy Spirit, as had been that of the prophets of old (I Peter 1:12; II Peter 1:21).

CHRISTIANITY IS A RELIGION OF THE WORD

The biblical revelation is essentially a piece of good news, the proclamation of a message. Christianity is presented above all as a religion of the Word, concentrated on the manifestation of the divine presence and of the truth concerning it. Thus Christianity rests on a purely spiritual plane. As for human religions, they are based on things to do, on rites to observe, on statues to worship and to carry in processions, and on ecclesiastical framework.

It is with wonderful simplicity that Christ declares to us: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life*" (John 5:24). "*The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life*" (6:63). And we have this promise from God: "*My word . . . that goeth forth out of my*

mouth . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isa. 55:11).

"*Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life*" (John 6:68).

THE SUPERNATURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF SCRIPTURE

FROM BEGINNING TO END, Scripture proclaims its divine inspiration. The prophets, Christ and His apostles confirmed it without any reservation. The synagogue and the early church also believed in it absolutely. But has the Bible internal qualities to confirm its supernatural origin? It has, beyond any doubt; and God has willed that it provide in itself its own credentials. He has not permitted the all-important question of the authority of Scripture to depend on minute research, for which study none but scholars have leisure and capacity; or on abstract metaphysics beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. There must stand out from the very pages of the Scriptures an evident demonstration of their authority and origin. To this, of course, is added the inner witness of the Holy Spirit, without which there can be no true, living faith in the Word of God.¹

SUBLIME REVELATION OF GOD AND OF JESUS CHRIST

Scripture, which claims to be God's Word, paints a unique portrait of Him, one that exceeds any human representation of divinity. "Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods" (Ps. 96:4-5). Apart from a few rare vestiges of a primitive revelation, the Babylonian, Egyptian, Grecian, Roman, Germanic, Celtic, Hindu, Chinese and other mythologies demonstrate an enormous shipwreck of all notions of truth, holiness and certainty. The God of the Bible is the only true God: Spirit, Creator and sovereign Master of the universe—glorious, eternal, holy, absolute in wisdom, incomprehensible in essence and perfect in justice—He is the source of unfathomable love, perpetually springing up from the depths of His Father heart. He is also the Redeemer, who suffered in identification with His fallen creatures, and who drew near to them by revelation and incarnation, so as to effect—and at what a price—the tremendous plan for God's salvation of humanity.

The person of Jesus Christ, likewise, surpasses any earthly depiction. "Not thus do men invent." No human author could ever have imagined among the sons of men a figure pure and radiant as He. "Never man so spake" (John 7:46). None other ever lived, suffered or loved like Him. Risen from the dead, He alone is able to regenerate us by His own life. Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh, is proof par excellence of the divine inspiration of the Word made Book. He is, indeed, its only really necessary proof. He who, by faith and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, has met in Jesus Christ the living God through the pages of the sacred Book—that one has need of no further demonstration. He cries out: "One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see" (John 9:25). This God-Man—and this Book—bestowed on me with one swift touch both sight and life! "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now [that I have read it] mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5).

UNIQUE REVELATION OF MAN

In the fallen state where he finds himself, man cannot comprehend unaided the essential elements of either his nature or his destiny. From whence has he come? What is the purpose of his existence, his sufferings and his death? What is his final destiny? "Who will answer?" All of earth's religions and philosophies, curiously canceling one another out by their maze of contradictions, only leave man, before every human contingency, groping in the dark in a panic of uncertainty.

Nothing but the Bible, the Creator's own Word, provides a response to all these questions. It reveals to him his origin, inconceivably sublime, created in the image of God. It provides the story of his fall and explains the contradictory state in which he finds himself, torn between good and evil, happiness and suffering, death and life. Before this mirror, man, astonished, beholds his heart laid bare. He feels himself found out, reprovved and condemned; but at the same time called, loved, valued and restored. The Author of the Bible is omniscient. He made man: He needs no one to tell Him what is in His creature. The Bible compresses, as it were, the whole of a human personality into a capsule and shows up as though by an X ray his deep springs and secret passions, and the unsuspected potential of his being (cf. I Cor. 14:25). Never did book speak like this Book; and

man, by a mysterious instinct (John 10:4), recognizes in its voice that of the Father, who is conducting him along the path to everlasting life.

From the moment of that recognition he begins to see where he is going; he perceives the meaning of history, even as he does that of his own destiny; he keeps reorienting his life in view of the coming kingdom; he lives already in terms of eternity. Truly, with Paul we realize that these things have not at all entered into the heart of natural man; on the very face of them they bear the proof of their supernatural origin (I Cor. 2:9-10).

THE PLAN OF SALVATION, INCONCEIVABLE TO THE HUMAN MIND

When we compare other religions with the biblical faith, several facts become clear. Human systems can offer no true salvation because they do not know the thrice holy God, His absolute requirements and His condemnation of every disobedience to His law. They have neither a real sense of sin nor a solution to the problem of sin. Man, so they think, is not irremediably lost; and he can redeem himself by his own efforts, by his "good works." Thus he becomes his own savior. No indeed! Man in no wise succeeds in saving himself; and his conscience, troubled in spite of all, never finds the certitude of forgiveness.

The Bible, on the contrary, soundly denounces, as only God can do, our guilt and helplessness and declares our consequent eternal perdition. Then it shows the Lord Himself paying by love all our debt at the cross and freely offering us His incomprehensible grace, and total assurance of salvation along with it. All our future, both earthly and heavenly, is henceforth concentrated on the person of Him who is coming to reign forever and ever.

What human author, what religious genius, could ever have invented a message at once so humiliating for the proud sinner and so marvelous for the repentant believer? Well might Paul cry out: "God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? . . . To him be the glory for ever" (Rom. 11:32-36).

THE PROPHECIES, PROOF OF DIVINE INSPIRATION

God alone omniscient, therefore able to predict the future. He is eternal; time has no significance to Him; and both tomorrow and eternity itself are before His eyes even as is today. No false god, no other religion on earth has ever brought forth prophecies comparable to those of the Bible. "Who hath declared it from the beginning . . . and beforetime, that we may say, He is right? . . . There is no man; even among them there is no counsellor. . . . I have declared, and I have saved, and I have showed; and there was no strange god among you . . . that performeth the counsel of his messengers" (Isa. 41:26, 28; 43:12; 44:26).

Divination and magic, however, were very prevalent in the ancient world (as they are in our modern world). There abounded everywhere oracles, pythonesses, Delphic pythons, astrologers, augurers and diviners. False prophets can be recognized by the fact that their predictions do not come true (Deut. 18:20-22) or that their ambiguous pronouncements lend themselves to any interpretation (Delphic oracles, Nostradamus, etc.). Without divine inspiration, prophecy is so risky a business that the so-called sacred books of human religions contain practically nothing of it.

Prominence of prophecy in Scripture. In the Old Testament, seventeen out of the thirty-nine books are prophetic books, without counting the very numerous predictions contained, for example, in the writings of Moses and in the Psalms. In the New Testament, entire chapters of the gospels, many passages in the Epistles, and also the whole of Revelation are devoted to prophecy. It is therefore not a question of a few sibylline sentences from which a person draws whatever he wants to, but of significant events announced a long time in advance, minute details realized to the very letter, and a great many verifiable circumstances which God alone could thus predict. Whereas, in the case of that many human prophecies, a thousand among them could easily turn out to be false, it is very remarkable that facts have not proved one biblical prophecy false.²

Great prophetic themes. Let us consider some domains where the predicted fulfillment finds irrefutable verification.

Israel

Sojourn in Egypt of Abraham's descendants to last four hundred years (Gen. 15:13-16)

The royal family and the King of kings to come out of Judah (Gen. 49:10)

Israel to be forever a separated people (Num. 23:9)

Infidelity, captivity and dispersion of the people to take place (Deut. 28:20-66; Lev. 26:14-39)

The ten tribes warned sixty-five years in advance that they were to be despoiled by the king of Assyria (Ezra 7:8-20)

Judah to be carried away into Babylon for seventy years (Jer. 25:11; 29:10)

After the rejection of the Messiah, Jerusalem and the temple to be destroyed (Dan. 9:25-26; Matt. 24:1-2, 34)

Israel to undergo worldwide dispersion and suffering (Luke 21:20-24; Deut. 28:64-67)

The Jewish race to survive in spite of all, until the end of time (Jer. 31:35-36) even after the extinction of all the other great peoples of antiquity

Israel to be brought back into her fatherland, a desolate wilderness, and she—along with it—to blossom again like a rose (Ezek. 36-37)

The people of the promised Messiah to be finally converted (Zech. 12:10; Rom. 11:25-29). This prophecy is for a time yet future, but its fulfillment is certain, just as in the case of all those which have preceded it.

The Messiah. We have cited (chap. 18, subhead "Christ's Coming as a Fulfillment of the Scriptures") the fulfillment of such Messianic prophecies as are mentioned in the gospel of Matthew alone. Now, it is affirmed that 333 of the prophecies concerning Christ have been fulfilled! According to the law of probabilities, there would be one chance out of 83 billion that so many predictions would come true in the case of one single individual.³ Needless to say, such a "chance" does not exist, and no one but the omniscient God could predict and act like this.

The nations. Outside Israel, many historical events have likewise entered into the prophetic field:

the total destruction of Nineveh, proud capital of Assyria (Zeph. 2:13-15; Nahum)

the dramatic fall of Babylon (Isa. 13; 21:1-10)

the judgment of Egypt and the final loss of her supremacy (Ezek. 29, especially vv. 15-16)

the course and decline of the empires succeeding the Babylonian, the empires of the Medes and Persians, Greece (with Alexander and his successors), and, finally, Rome, without her being named (Dan. 2:7-8, etc.)

the famous prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel 9, specifying the length of time before the appearance of the Messiah and the role of the nations in respect to His coming

the taking of Tyre by Nebuchadnezzar after a thirteen-year siege and the fate which Alexander finally inflicted on her (Ezek. 26; Jer. 27:1-11)

The end time. Christ, as well as the prophets of both the Old Testament and the New, sketched in detail the denouement of history, devastatingly relevant in general to what we can now see coming to pass before our eyes:

The earth will one day be completely filled with men, in accordance with the command stated in Genesis 1:28 (in twenty-five years, there will be over 6 billion people).

The gospel of Christ will be preached to all nations; then will come the end (Matt. 24:14). What an audacious declaration on the part of the humble Carpenter of Nazareth! Yet the Bible, wholly or in part, has been translated and preached in thousands of languages in the form of the spoken word, the printed page, records, radio and television, so that all can hear its message (see p. 296).

By way of contrast, most men harden their hearts in unbelief and in their repudiation of moral and spiritual values (Matt. 24:10-12). This statement needs no comment.

Wars will become increasingly violent and more widespread (Matt. 24:6-7; Rev. 6:4, 8). Peace will be taken from the earth: an appalling proportion of mankind will be annihilated: these things are all too possible in our atomic age.

Religious persecutions will grow worse and worse (Matt. 24:8-10).

In the light of the destruction of 5 or 6 million Jews in this

twentieth century, who could argue that this is overdrawn (cf. Dan. 12:7; Zech. 13:8-9).

Humanity is rushing on toward a universal government and the dictatorship of the Antichrist announced by the prophets (Dan. 7:24-26; II Thess. 2:3-12; Rev. 13:1-8).

All this will coincide with most extraordinary events in Palestine, the Jews having gone back to their land in unbelief (Ezek. 37; Matt. 24:15-16).

Jesus Christ solemnly warned us: "When these things begin to come to pass, look up, and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28).

Once again, do not such prophecies, tied together, form a bundle of irrefutable proofs of the divine inspiration of Scripture?*

Spiritual value of biblical prophecies. Divination has as its goal merely the satisfaction of the curiosity and interest of man. Biblical prophecy, on the contrary, always contains an element of solemn warning and encouragement in line with the accomplishment of God's plan. In disclosing the future, the Lord reveals something of Himself and prepares man for meeting Him. Thus He makes His wisdom, omniscience, sovereignty and eternality shine out in a most convincing manner. The prophecies concerning Israel have a pedagogic value. The prophetic figure of the Messiah surpasses all the understanding and even all the expectation of the chosen people: the prophecies are meant to prepare the hearts of these people to receive Him. The predictions about the nations are not in line with the ordinary laws of human politics, but with the kingdom of God. The tableau of the end of time must govern all our life and its activities. The vision of the triumph of the Lord brings into a right perspective our view of the world, and thereafter we know ourselves marked out for eternity. Only a divine message can produce such an effect as this. None but God can reveal secrets (Dan. 2:20-23). What He has foretold of His message strengthens our faith when we see its fulfillment (John 13:19; 14:29).

THE POWER OF LIFE WHICH EMERGES FROM THE BIBLE

The Word of God is living and active. The eternal Word, with a word, created the world (Heb. 11:3). From the written Word, the

*Those interested in the great subject of biblical prophecy will find it treated in detail in our work *The Return of Jesus Christ*.

living oracle of the Lord, there emanates a supernatural power. "Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces? Behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them" (Jer. 23:29; 5:14).

After having spoken of the message given to the people in the desert and confirmed in the Psalms by the Holy Spirit, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews concludes: "For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. . . . All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (3:7; 4:12-13).

Scripture convicts of sin and awakens consciences. Expressing the law of God and His will, it makes our disobediences stand out sharply, and it pronounces on us the judgment we merit. Like a mirror, it reveals to our eyes our natural face, which others see so easily, but which we ourselves do not see (James 1:23). If we are sincere, this discovery plunges us into great confusion. The Holy Spirit likewise confirms in us the gravity of the judgments of Scripture. The very Word of the Lord will judge us at the last day (John 12:48). And it is Moses who will accuse his impenitent readers before God (5:45).

It is easy to show that every revival in Israel came about through a rediscovery of Scripture and the conviction of sin immediately produced in the heart by means of it. One day there was brought to Josiah the book of the law that had lain forgotten in the temple. "When the king had heard the words of the law, . . . he rent his clothes. And the king commanded . . . Go ye, inquire of Jehovah . . . concerning the words of the book that is found; for great is the wrath of Jehovah that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of Jehovah, to do according to all that is written in this book" (II Chron. 34:14-21). At the time of Jeremiah, all the princes of the people asked Baruch to read to them the message written by the prophet. "When they had heard all the words [of the Lord contained in the book], they turned in fear one toward another, and said unto Baruch: We will surely tell the king of all these words." But the king, quite undismayed, cut the book with a penknife and cast it into the fire. Because of that very thing, the Lord pronounced a terrible chastisement on him, his nation and his people (Jer. 36:1-

31). After the captivity, Ezra and Nehemiah, along with the people, solemnly renewed their consecration to God. This obviously came about through a public reading of holy Scripture. The effect was such that the leaders said to the crowd: "Mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law." Then a fast was celebrated: "They . . . read in the book of the law of Jehovah . . . a fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed and worshipped Jehovah their God" (Neh. 8:1-9; 9:3).

Who among God's children did not, through the holy Book, become so convinced of his lost condition in the sight of the sovereign Judge, as to cry out in the presence of Jesus like the Samaritan woman: "He told me all things that ever I did" (John 4:39)? And in all the history of the church, as in the history of Israel, every spiritual renewal has without exception been produced by a return to the Bible. Note, for example, the Waldensians of Lyons and of the Piedmont; Wycliffe and the Lollards in England; John Huss and the Bohemian brethren; the great Reformers—Luther, Calvin, Zwingli and Knox; the Pietists and the Moravians of the eighteenth century; Haldane and the others in the nineteenth century Genevan revival, etc. In every age the declaration of Isaiah stands true: "To the law and to the testimony! if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them" (Isa. 8:20).

The Word of life regenerates the sinner. Human books, even the most devotional ones, have no life in themselves. They can at best be simply an echo of the heavenly message. Holy Scripture, the living and permanent Word of God, acts like an incorruptible seed to regenerate us, that is, to resurrect us spiritually (I Peter 1:23-25). Preached or written, its message is the Word of life, which gives light to the world (Phil. 2:15). It works effectually in those who believe (I Thess. 2:13), for it is Spirit and life. The law apart from the Spirit (the "letter") condemns and kills, but the Spirit who quickens the Word transmits eternal life to us by means of it (John 6:63; II Cor. 3:3, 6). "The gospel . . . is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). "Belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (10:17). Paul said to the Corinthians: "In Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel" (I Cor. 4:15). Finally, Jesus cried out: "He that heareth my word, and believeth

him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24).

Such affirmations are not just idle talk. Of thousands, even millions, of men it can be said that contact with the Scriptures literally has regenerated their lives. Let us cite three famous examples:

Augustine for thirty-one years led a tumultuous existence, alternating between efforts of self-reformation and repeated defeats and misery. Writhing one day in wretched humiliation in the garden, he heard the voice of a child from the neighborhood chanting: "Take and read! Take and read!" He went to get the scroll containing the epistles of Paul, and his eyes fell on Romans 13:14. All was decided by a word, in an instant: Jesus had overcome! Augustine made no attempt to inquire further; he closed the book. With the end of that sentence "a stream of light and security was poured into his soul; and all the night of his doubts had vanished."⁴

Luther, crushed by the burden of his sin and exhausted from his useless mortification, crawled on his knees up Pilate's fabulous staircase at Rome. One simple word from Scripture suddenly seized him with superhuman power: "The righteous shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17). That word sufficed; the Reformation came into existence, giving to mankind the Bible, the Saviour, the liberty of the children of God and assurance of eternal life.

Wesley had been seeking to lead a *methodical* life of devotion (origin of the word "Methodist"). After studying theology at Oxford, he set out to do missionary work in America, although he had not yet come to any assurance of his own salvation. But on May 24, 1738, God spoke to him two different times through verses from the Bible (II Peter 1:4 and Psalm 130). He said that that evening he went very unwillingly to a meeting on Aldersgate Street, where someone was reading Luther's preface to the epistle to the Romans. "About a quarter before nine," he wrote, "while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away *my* sins, even *mine*, and saved *me* from the law of sin and death."⁵

It is because our lives have been transformed in this same way, thanks to the Bible, that we testify to its regenerating power. All the

arguments brought up against it could not keep us from replying: "I know him whom I have believed" (II Tim. 1:12); and "I believed, and therefore did I speak" (II Cor. 4:13).

Scripture sanctifies the believer. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). After communicating life to the child of God, that Word nourishes it and makes it grow. "As newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation; if ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (I Peter 2:2-3). The psalmist exclaims: "My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thine ordinances at all times. I delight in thy law. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth! I opened wide my mouth, and panted; for I longed for thy commandments" (Ps. 119:20, 70, 103, 131).

This daily appetite for holy Scripture on the part of the newly converted is an indisputable fact. Every time that he meditates on the Word, he is strengthened, comforted and warned by it. So here again Scripture gives a pragmatic demonstration of its supernatural character.

Jesus Himself prayed: "Sanctify them in the truth" (John 17:17). He added: "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 8:31-32; 15:3). Christ gave Himself up for the church "that he might sanctify it . . . with the word" (Eph. 5:26). "Young men, . . . ye are strong, . . . the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one" (I John 2:14).

The pure and radiant lives of genuine Christians are also, in our corrupt world, one of the greatest proofs of the divine origin of Scripture. None but the Word, the Creator, could turn a selfish, sin-stained individual—sometimes even a derelict—into a victorious personality overflowing with love. Such believers are true "letters of Christ," living Bibles, known and read of all men (II Cor. 3:2-3). "That ye may become blameless," says Paul, "children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom ye are seen as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life" (Phil. 2:15-16).

By God's grace, the world has not lacked living witnesses for Christ,

people who have changed the course of their times, bettered the world, or revived the church. After the slumber of the Middle Ages, the Reformers caused the breath of the Spirit of God to pass over Europe. Pascal, although physically a sufferer, expressed in brilliant language some of the deepest, as well as some of the simplest, truths of the gospel. Wesley and Whitefield literally rescued England from a moral, social and spiritual situation which was dragging the country down to ruin. Elizabeth Fry in the prisons, Josephine Butler with prostitutes, William and Catherine Booth in the slums, Hudson Taylor in the heart of China and Billy Graham in his world-wide evangelistic outreach—all these and many more have demonstrated that the message of the gospel still works miracles everywhere it goes.

The Word of God puts to flight the adversary. It is the sword of the Spirit, the perfect piece of offensive armor (Eph. 6:17). Adolphe Monod in these words reminds us of the way Christ used it to triumph over Satan:

Scripture simply quoted, without explanation or comment—this is all that Jesus used to oppose the great adversary, that mysterious and terrible day in which the whole work of our redemption hung in the balances.

“It is written!” and the tempter stops in his tracks.

“It is written!” and he slinks back.

“It is written!” and he has taken to his heels.

“It is written,” and by whom? By Moses, the messenger, the servant, the creature of the One whom that word delivers in the hour of combat and distress!⁶

How could such a thing be possible were it not for the fact that this word is divinely inspired?

The fact that the enemy cringes before the power of Scripture is demonstrated by the incessant attacks which he launches against it. He shudders before this Book, in which the Saviour is announced and in which he himself is completely unmasked. He hates the Bible, which shows him up as defeated and as one to be punished for all eternity, this certainty repeated from Genesis 3:15 all the way to Revelation 20:10. From the outset he has asked the wily question: “Hath God said?” (Gen. 3:1). In every age he has found doubters who have supposed they could know freedom by following him. But the most disconcerting characteristic of our times of apostasy is the

adversary’s planned attack the last two hundred years on the Scriptures and on their authority. One third of the population of the world is subjugated under an openly atheistic regime. We in the Western world have come into an era that has been called post-Christian, in which only about 10 percent of the people take “religion” seriously. An even more disconcerting fact, one which explains many others, is that a very great proportion of “Christianity” today are joining together in a chorus to repeat the famous question “Hath God said?” and to reject the idea that the Bible is the Word of God.

Scripture withstands every assault. The Huguenots pictured the Bible and the Christian faith as an anvil surrounded by three vigorous blacksmiths, beneath which they put this inscription:

“The more they pound and the more they shout,

The more they wear their hammers out!”

Is it not a divine irony that the nineteenth century, with its exceptionally critical spirit in theology, in literature and in politics, witnessed at the same time the greatest triumphs for the Bible? The British and Foreign Bible Society alone in 150 years (from 1804 to 1954) printed more than 600 million Bibles and Scripture portions. Counting in the other societies, the total production during that same period goes up to 1,300 million copies. Still, for so many centuries, men have been making the most determined efforts to destroy the Scriptures, to prohibit them, to refute them and to ridicule them; and all this came about since the persecutions of Antiochus Epiphanes, Domitian and the Inquisition, down to the attacks of the philosophers, the mockery of the enemies of the faith and the impressive arguments of so-called science, itself in a state of perpetual evolution.

This is still more wonderful when we consider by whom these writings were preserved. The Jews were the conscientious guardians of the book of the Kingdom. Rome preserved the book of the Church. The Jews, who themselves rejected the Messiah of whom Moses and the prophets testify, preserve the very books which prove their unbelief and convince the world of the divine authority and mission of Jesus.⁷

Where is there a nation preserving carefully a record which so repeatedly and emphatically declares that they are obstinate,

ungrateful, and perverse; and which attributes all their victories and excellencies, not to their natural disposition and qualities, but exclusively to the mercy and power of God? Look again at the Church of Rome, preserving the writings of evangelists and apostles: that Church preserving writings which declare that Christ hath perfected by one sacrifice them that are sanctified; that salvation is by grace, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God; that all believers are kings and priests unto God; that there is no Mediator between God and men but the Man Christ Jesus; that men forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats are the expected false teachers; that Mary is told by the Son Himself not to interfere in the concerns of His kingdom [she had no role in the Church after the time of Acts 1:14]; that Peter savored the things that are of man [and was severely reprimanded by Paul] . . . Christians are commended for subjecting even the teaching of apostles to the authority and confirmation of Scripture! (Heb. 7:24-25; 10:14; Eph. 2:8-9; Rev. 1:6; I Tim. 2:5; 4:1-5; Gal. 2:11; Acts 17:11)!

The Jews bear unwilling witness to Jesus, and Rome has preserved and carefully transcribed her own condemnation.⁸

The same can be said of the Protestants, formerly a people of the Bible, who have also kept and disseminated it without always believing it.

Conclusion. It is difficult to set down in a few words all the services that the Bible has rendered to humanity, a constantly renewed manifestation of its regenerating power. Vinet has said: "The gospel in the world is freedom's immortal seed." The word "gospel" could be replaced by the word "Scripture," for it is found only in Scripture. It was as inspired by the Bible that the Christians, emerging from the cruel and amoral society of antiquity, were the pioneers in each of the following domains:

- the suppression of slavery
- the emancipation of woman
- compassion for suffering and for human misery
- care for the sick, disabled and aged
- establishment of hospitals, rest homes and orphanages
- the impetus given to the sciences by the suppression of the bonds of superstition

- the struggle against prostitution, alcoholism and vice
- the instruction of children, even of the completely outcast among them
- youth movements and camps
- action against poverty and social injustices
- the work of the Red Cross, aid to prisoners and to war victims, etc.

What disciples of the Bible initiated has often been copied or taken over by the state and by political groups when the religious influence has no longer been desired (or when that influence has simply faded out). But there can be no doubt as to the origin. There can plainly be seen the marked difference between Christian countries and non-Christian in both standard of living and morality. And even among the first-named a contrast can immediately be noticed, in general, to the advantage of those countries where the people have the Bible, that is, the Protestant lands. Let anyone, for example, compare Northern and Southern Europe, Northern and Southern Ireland, English and French Canada, and Anglo-Saxon and Latin America, etc.⁹

"Blessed is the nation whose God is Jehovah" (Ps. 33:12).

Blessed is the country (if there is one!) which finds its inspiration solely in the Bible!

THE ETERNAL YOUTH OF SCRIPTURE

Being the Book of the eternal God, the Bible is bathed in an atmosphere of eternity. In a sense it is outside of time; and it hovers over the history of our race, our earth and our universe. Revealing the plan of the One who is the Alpha and the Omega, it leads us from eternity to eternity, from that which preceded the great beginning right up to the final consummation of all things.

Since it has never taught anything but the truth, it is the Book for all generations: the experiences of the very earliest ages serve as examples to us and are written for our instruction (I Cor. 10:11). Thus it is that Scripture never grows old. It reveals to us the heart of God and the heart of man in a way which is never outdated. What book of antiquity could endure comparison to it, on this point as on so many other points? All human books rapidly become "dated," so rapidly that textbooks used in one generation are cast aside promptly

by the next (and these days are generally kept in use only a few years). Quite the contrary is true of God's Book in its entirety.

Moses edifies us today as does no other book written thirty-five hundred years ago. He brings us to know the sovereign God, who is the Creator and the holy and merciful One. His laws (for example, those of the Decalogue) take their origin from an incomparable and exemplary morality. The social state that he sets before us is superior to that of the most progressive nations and reformers. His precepts on hygiene astonish modern physicians. The worship, rich in imagery, and the priesthood which he depicts serve as the basis for the whole presentation of the gospel of Christ in the epistle to the Hebrews.

The psalmists speak the universal language of the heart—suffering, doubting, calling out for help, communing with God, triumphing and overflowing with joy. During World War I a soldier who came across the Psalms for the first time believed they had just come out and expressed astonishment that none of the newspapers of the day had made any mention of so exceptional and so timely an author!

The prophets seem also to have been writing for our very own age. Such writers as Isaiah, Jeremiah, etc., picture the exact conditions of our world and of believers, all the more strikingly since both their promises and their threats are still in the process of being fulfilled.

The Gospels, filled with the incomparable figure of Christ, have lost nothing of their freshness and purity. Imperishable jewels, they remain forever the most beautiful pages of world literature and those the most widely read.

Both *the Acts* and *the Epistles* serve to perpetually establish and to inspire the church of Jesus Christ.

Finally, *Revelation*, like the writings of the prophets, defies time and astounds every generation by its repeated fulfillments.

This ever living character is affirmed by Scripture itself: "Of old have I known from thy testimonies, that thou hast founded them for ever. Every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever" (Ps. 119:152, 160). "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 5:18; 24:35). "Having been begotten again . . . of incorruptible [seed] through the word of God, which liveth and abideth. . . . For . . . the word of the Lord abideth for ever" (I Peter 1:23-25).

We constantly experience afresh its perennial quality and testify that the Bible ever remains the Word of the Lord, which directly addresses itself to us, here and now.

The *inexhaustible character* of the biblical text is another demonstration of the same fact. A given Scripture passage never has its last word for us. We have read it perhaps dozens and dozens of times, very often with evident profit. Still, under different circumstances, it touches us anew, revealing to us some aspect of the truth up to then unnoticed. Every attentive, believing reader of Scripture is "like unto . . . a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt. 13:52). If our heart is right in God's sight, we shall never meditate on the Word without discovering some new revelation in it. And the only way for a preacher to bring a living message, fresh and relevant to the times, is for him constantly to draw from the treasury of the Scriptures those things as new as they are fundamental.

THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE BIBLE

If the Bible is the Book for every epoch, it is also the Book for all men. It literally speaks to all peoples, languages, races and nations; to all ages—from childhood to old age; to all different types of personalities; to all social classes. Has it not had for its human authors the most varied people: shepherds, fishermen, unlettered men, priests, doctors of the law, a medical doctor, intellectuals, kings, statesmen, poets, prophets and historians? Thus it is that Scripture possesses a variety designed to answer to all needs and all tastes. In it is found every sort of writing: historical, juridical, legislative, social, moral, biographical, poetic, sententious, didactic, epistolary and prophetic.

The lyrics of Greece and Rome are known only to the learned few. We may well ask How is it that the sorrows and joys, the difficulties and doubts, the aspirations and hopes of men, so apart in time and in clime, should find expression in the same songs [the Psalms]. . . . The most cultivated nations bow before it and learn as docile children from its inexhaustible pages; to the rudest tribes light and love are brought from its simple and powerful declarations. . . . While kings and philosophers find wisdom in this inspired volume, it is the companion of the artisan and merchant, the comfort of the widow, and instructor of the unlettered and uneducated. There is no age of man

when it is not suitable. It gives milk to babes, guidance to the young, strength to men, and consolation to the aged. . . . It is an armory to those who are in battle, a storehouse to those who are lonely . . . a rod and staff to the dying.

We are not surprised that the Bible has been called *the Book*. Sir Walter Scott, during his last illness, asked his son-in-law to read to him out of the Book. "What book?" was the question. And the great man's reply was "There is only one Book, the Bible."¹⁰

The only work written over a span of fifteen hundred years, the Bible is predestined to adapt itself to the most diverse periods in history. Right from the outset it has been the Book for the ages. It is, moreover, very striking that this most universal of books was produced by a little people set aside from all others, not distinguished at all in the domains of culture, art, philosophy, erudition, power or brilliance of civilization. Greece and Rome, so exceptional from all these points of view, have come far from originating anything like it. And, another remarkable fact, Israel herself has produced absolutely nothing analogous to it. What can we conclude except that the unique and universal character of Scripture is the miraculous product of a uniquely divine inspiration.

It may be suggested that the above declarations are the fruit of imagination and of a preconceived idea. Now this can easily be answered with tangible proofs. The world-wide diffusion of Scripture and the fact that well through the twentieth century it continues to be the top best seller cannot be denied. The entire Bible exists today in 236 languages intelligible to 90 percent of the population of the world. The New Testament has been translated into 289 other languages, spoken by another 5 percent of that same population. Isolated books of Scripture in more than 700 less important languages permit the reaching of another 3 percent of the inhabitants of the globe. The rest of the population—about 2 percent—represent limited groups (in New Guinea and Equatorial Africa and among Latin American Indians, for example), people whose languages have not yet been put into writing, places where there is total illiteracy (Ecumenical Press Service, 1965). To the above statistics 30 to 40 new translations are added every year. In 1962, 50 million Bibles and portions of Holy Scripture were distributed on five continents. A

great effort is now under way to triple these figures. In Latin America alone, the distribution had passed 9 million copies in 1961 and 17 million in 1962. As for the gospel on records, the contemporary organization called Gospel Recordings has itself made records in more than three thousand languages and has freely distributed more than 5 million copies of them.

THE SUPERIORITY OF THE BIBLE OVER ALL OTHER RELIGIOUS BOOKS—JEWISH, CHRISTIAN AND PAGAN

Another supernatural character of Scripture stands out when one compares it to no matter what other book. Its real Author is manifestly greater than the human mind, for its message is infinite and eternal.

The Apocryphal books of the Old Testament, sometimes interesting from an historical point of view, are in every way inferior to the canonical writings. We have already cited the very definite opinion of Jerome on this point (p. 172). And Saphir has this to say on the subject: "Who that has tasted the old good wine could mistake for it the diluted and feeble work of man? What is the chaff to the wheat?"¹¹

Comparing the sacred text to the sources of Assyrian and Babylonian history, Mr. von Niebuhr remarks:

The Old Testament stands perfectly alone as an exception from the untruth of patriotism: it never conceals and disguises the calamities of the nation whose history it records. Its truthfulness is the highest in all historical writings—even for him who does not believe in its divine inspiration. At the same time I must also ascribe to it the most minute accuracy.¹²

What a contrast also appears between the Four Gospels and *the Apocryphal accounts of the life of Jesus!* "And how puerile are the miracles which tradition attributes to Him who, in all His doings, glorified and showed forth the Father!"¹³ Moreover, John makes it clear that at Cana Jesus wrought His first miracle; thus those He supposedly did during His childhood are excluded (John 2:11).

And the writings of the apostolic Fathers, beautiful and good as they are, only set forth more brightly the marvelous peculiarity of the inspired apostolic epistles, their inexhaustible depth,

their heavenly simplicity, their wonderful condensation, their transparent clearness, their universality, in short, their divine character.¹⁴

Neander makes the same remark:

A phenomenon, singular in its kind, is the striking difference between the writings of the apostles and those of the apostolic Fathers, who were so nearly their contemporaries. In other cases transitions are wont to be gradual, but in this instance we observe sudden change . . . a phenomenon which should lead us to acknowledge the fact of a special agency of the divine Spirit in the souls of the apostles and of a new creative element in the first period.¹⁵

It is, furthermore, most disconcerting to see how quickly the Fathers alienated themselves from Scripture and from the simplicity of the gospel. Two or three centuries after the time of the apostles, they had already initiated some of the deviations which were to distort the church in succeeding centuries. And what can we say of their flagrant errors in the realm of natural laws (see, earlier, chap. 14, subhead "Errors Avoided").

The Koran claims to have been brought from heaven to Muhammad, piece by piece, by the angel Gabriel. Containing a few pious sentences, together with a number of social preoccupations, it bears throughout the marks of a fallible, earthly mind. The mountains are supposed to have been created to keep the earth from moving, to hold it fast as with anchors and cables. Moses' sister Miriam is confused with the mother of Jesus (Sura 19:29). Several times Gabriel brings a special revelation from heaven to justify Muhammad: when he took the wife of his adopted son, when he tried to satisfy all the wives of his harem and when he appropriated as concubines his relatives and such other captives as pleased him (Sura 33:49-52, etc.). The Koran likewise establishes the permanent principle of the holy war and promises the faithful the most carnal of paradises. But the difference between the Koran and the Bible especially shines out in that which the Koran fails to say: the love of God which, in the incarnation, suffers with His creatures; the holiness which requires His punishment of sin; the expiation of transgressions on the cross; the full assurance of pardon; the regeneration which makes man new; and

the spirituality and truth of the whole revealed message—all this is what is missing in the book of Muhammad; and by way of contrast, it is the lack of these which all the more provides proof of the divine quality of Scripture.

Neither can *the sacred books of the Hindus* hold up to comparison with the Bible, these Hindu books with their 330 millions of gods, one of the greatest of which, Shiva, is always and everywhere symbolized by the organ of reproduction; the supposition of hundreds of thousands of reincarnations in the form of beast or man, until such time as a nebulous nirvana delivers the individual by bringing an end to his every desire. Once again, in this we find a total absence of a real solution to the problem of sin and misery, of any moving out of the earthly into a pure, liberated life, of an absolute righteousness, and of a blessed and active eternal state in the presence of God.

Here is what we find in Hindu cosmogony: The moon is fifty thousand leagues higher than the sun; it shines with its own light; it animates our body. Night is caused by the sun's setting behind the mountain Someyra, situated in the middle of the earth, and several thousand miles high. Our earth is flat and triangular, composed of seven stages, each with its own degree of beauty, its own inhabitants and its own sea, the first of honey, another of sugar, another of butter, another of wine; in fine, the whole mass is borne on the heads of countless elephants, which, shaking themselves, cause earthquakes in this nether world!¹⁶

For Plato, the world is an intelligent animal. The writings of *the Greek and Roman philosophers*, Aristotle, Seneca, Pliny, Plutarch and Cicero, so remarkable from a great many points of view, abound in declarations, even one of which would suffice to compromise forever our doctrines of inspiration if that error were found in any book of Holy Scripture.¹⁷

We could continue our comparison for a long time. But let us now limit it to *the divine restraint of the inspired texts*.

The Jews added the two *Talmuds* to Scripture, attributing to them the same divine authority; one of these (the Jerusalem) makes a big in-folio volume; the other (the Babylonian), of twelve in-folio volumes, is the one which scholars study and follow the most assiduously.

The Roman Church, at the Council of Trent, declared that it received "with the same affection and reverence . . . as Holy Scripture

... the traditions concerning faith and practice, that is, the immense repertory of her synodal acts, of her decretals, of her bulls, of her canons, and of the writings of the Holy Fathers."¹⁸

In that regard, Gausson says: look at what the Holy Spirit has done in the Bible and admire the heavenly prudence of its inimitable brevity. The whole account of the creation of the world takes only thirty-one verses. The temptation, fall and condemnation of the race is given in twenty-four verses, although many chapters are used to describe the tabernacle and its sacrifices, prefiguring Jesus Christ and His work of redemption. Two chapters suffice to take humanity all the way from the fall to the deluge; then most of Genesis is devoted to the lives of the patriarchs, since they initiate the line that leads to the Messiah. The Ten Commandments and the sublime summary of them (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18) have a good deal more to say about our duty toward God, parents, family, workers, foreigners, goods, life, rest, honor and truth than do all the works of antiquity put together.

Each of the Gospels recounts in 16 to 28 brief chapters—in only 800 lines—the life of Jesus Christ: His birth, youth, teachings, miracles, example, sufferings, death, resurrection and ascension. These facts are set down with such impartiality, reverence for God and man, restraint and truth that we ask again: Is this the way man goes about it to tell anything? Still, the evangelists were “men of like passions,” and their hearts burned with love for their Master. How is it then that they could depict with so much calm, restraint, sobriety and apparent impassivity the wretched murder of the One whom they worshiped? And how could they so realistically bring out their own cowardice and carnal spirit, without rationalizing it or adding any further comments?

In *Acts*, Luke retraces in about thirty pages the thirty most beautiful years of Christianity. Again, what admirable restraint! Who but the Holy Spirit could have exhibited this conciseness, this choice of details, this sort of style—devout, brief and richly significant—making use of so few words but teaching so many truths? Add to all this the reserve and voluntary self-effacement of the historian, who can be seen nowhere except in the change of the personal pronoun (the “we” beginning in Acts 16:10). Still, throughout ten whole years Luke shared Paul’s journeys and sufferings, from Troas to Jerusalem

and Caesarea, and to Rome, from which place Paul cried out: “All forsook me. Only Luke is with me” (II Tim. 4:16, 11).

The thoughts just brought out were suggested by Gausson; and, with him, we shall quote Origen again: “The sacred volumes breathe the plenitude of the Spirit; and there is nothing either in the prophets, or in law, or in gospel, or in apostle, which does not come down from the fulness of the majesty of God.”¹⁹

CONCLUSION

For a man who can see, the existence of the sun presents no problem; neither do its light, rays and heat; but a blind man, being deprived of direct vision, can doubt everything about the sun if he wants to.

For the believer, the supernatural character of Scripture is more than evident. He knows it is by Scripture that he has come to the light: “Whereas I was blind, now I see!” He met God by means of it, and he has found through Christ pardon, new life and the assurance of eternal salvation. The prophecies have convinced him of the omniscience of the Author of the Book. In the mirror of the Word he has recognized the portrait of his own heart depicted by that One who is able to plumb its depths better than he himself can. Every day, moreover, he continues to experience the power, eternal freshness and universality of Scripture and its superiority over all that is human.

Yes, we cry out with the psalmist: “I delight in thy law. The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver. My heart standeth in awe of thy words. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. I have chosen thy precepts” (Ps. 119:70, 72, 161-162, 173).

Unfortunately, all this which to us is irrefutable proof seems not at all to touch the unbeliever. The same is true for him of the plain testimony of creation. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). “For the invisible things of him [God] since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity” (Rom. 1:20). Yet the vast majority of men do not glorify the living and true God. Many are the foolish ones who say in their hearts: “There is no God” (Ps. 14:1). Many

also are the religious men, even some who claim to be Christians, who challenge God's other witness, the Bible. The reason, in many instances, is that there has been no new birth; and "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him . . . , because they are spiritually judged" (I Cor. 2:14). The case of Nicodemus shows us that this new birth may indeed be lacking even in the lives of religious leaders and of the "doctors in Israel" (John 3:3-10). Others, who may perhaps have had a better background, find themselves succumbing to the dangers mentioned by Paul: "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). "Guard that which is committed unto thee, turning away from the profane babblings and oppositions of the knowledge which is falsely so called; which some professing have erred concerning the faith" (I Tim. 6:20-21).

Thus we labor under no delusions. The universe is the great book of God for those who will to believe. The Bible is likewise His written Word, to such as receive by faith its testimony of life and power. The supernatural qualities of Scripture enumerated above cannot be, and we do not mean them to be, a rationalistic argument designed to spare our readers from having to exercise faith. On the contrary, we only conclude with Paul, and we repeat: "My speech and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (I Cor. 2:4-5).