

ISAIAH

our irrelevancies and goes to the very heart of our problem when He asks, "Whom do you say that I am?" (Mt. 16:15). For in this question He asks for conviction, confession and commitment to the only thing that matters—the deity of Jesus of Nazareth. Once that is settled, all else falls into proper place.

QUIZ

1. Why is it important to remember *who* God is?
2. How was Israel's sin blotted out?
3. Why is God able to direct His prophets to predict the future as if it were already accomplished?
4. Why direct the heavens to sing?
5. How does God frustrate the signs of the liars?
6. In what or whom did God ultimately confound the wisdom of the wise?

SPECIAL STUDY

THE TRANSCENDENT GOD REVEALED HIMSELF

John 1:18

by Paul T. Butler

INTRODUCTION

I. THE POSSIBILITY OF GOD REVEALING HIMSELF

A. Once established from Theism (natural revelation) that God exists and that He is the Uncaused, First Cause, with eternal power and deity (Rom. 1:20), the Purposing Designer of the universe—

1. then unless that which He created is greater than He . . . and

2. unless the laws He created are greater than the Lawgiver . . .

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3. There is no escaping the conclusion that He can, if He wishes, intervene in the universe to reveal Himself, to accomplish His omnipotent will and purpose.
- B. Uniformitarianism (dogma of the so-called "immutable laws of nature") does not preclude the possibility of supernatural intervention
 1. The "uniformity of nature" is not a force, it is a mere abstract designation of the force that is observed to be working.
 2. Both Heisenberg's principle of "indeterminacy" and Einstein's principle of relativity show that natural law is not "immutable."
 3. The absolute uniformity of nature depends upon human *observation of all time and all experience*—human observation has not been long enough into the past to say that these laws have always acted uniformly—nor can human observation say with any absoluteness what these laws will do in the immediate future!
 4. The question whether God has revealed Himself or not must be decided on the basis of evidence. Is there any evidence of supernatural intervention or revelation?

II. THE PROBABILITY OF GOD REVEALING HIMSELF

- A. Would God create man and leave him all alone? All reason cries NO!
 1. A man given a free will might do things contrary to the will of his Creator and be in danger, so the Creator would want to warn the creature.
 2. The Creator is a Being of Purpose. There must be some purpose for man. There is no way for man to find the Purposer's purpose for him unless the Purposer tells it!
- B. All religions, however pagan, have some form of revelation from their gods. Where did this idea of the higher being revealing himself come from if God did not

put it there and if such a revelation had not, in fact, occurred?

III. THE PROGRAM OF GOD'S REVELATION OF HIMSELF

- A. In History (events and deeds)
- B. In Words (directly and through human agents in human language)
- C. In Person (Jesus Christ)

DISCUSSION

I. GOD REVEALED HIMSELF IN HISTORY—IN EVENTS, DEEDS OR IN NATURE

- A. In Acts 14:15-18, Paul told the citizens of pagan Lystra that the Creator-God "*did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons . . .*"
- B. In Acts 17:22-30, Paul told the Athenian philosophers that what they and their poets had been led (by a revelation they had of God through nature and reason) to worship was a Person, not a thing of stone or wood. The Athenians should have known this and deduced it from the nature of their own being!
- C. In Romans 1:19-20, Paul writes that the Gentiles had a revelation of the wrath, the eternal power and deity of God in that which had been created (nature); cf. Psalms 19:1-4.
- D. God has revealed Himself through supernatural events (we call them miracles) which have taken place historically. Such events cannot be explained as natural phenomena (parting of the Red Sea; Noachian Flood, etc.) except by men who choose to deliberately ignore the facts (cf. II Peter 3:5).
 - 1. As a result of such supernatural events, having been

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empirically demonstrated, God expects man to reason to the Uncaused Cause (cf. Ex. 14:10-18; Psa. 44:1-3; 67:7-10; 78:1-72; 105:1ff; 106:1ff; 136:1ff).

2. Compare these references also: Dan. 4:34-37; Heb. 2:2-4; Jn. 5:19-23; 10:31-39; 14:8-11.
- E. Some still refuse to admit, even in the face of demonstrable, historical evidence, that miracles have occurred. C. S. Lewis puts it this way in "Miracles" . . . "Because such an admission would force them to admit there is a living God! Men exclude miracles from the realm of possibility today because in so doing they fashion for themselves a God who would not do miracles, or indeed anything else. Men are reluctant to pass over from the notion of an abstract and negative deity to the living God. An abstract and negative deity does nothing, demands nothing. He is there if you wish for Him, like a book on a shelf. He will not pursue you. It is with a shock that we discover a "living God." You have had a shock like that before, in connection with smaller matters—when the line pulls at your hand, when something breathes beside you in the darkness. So here; the shock comes at the precise moment when the thrill of *life* is communicated to us along the clue we have been following. It is always shocking to meet life where we thought we were alone. 'Look out,' we cry, 'it's alive!' An impersonal God—well and good. A subjective God of beauty, truth and goodness, inside our own heads—better still. A formless life-force surging through us, a vast power which we can tap—best of all. BUT GOD HIMSELF, ALIVE, PULLING AT THE OTHER END OF THE CORD, PERHAPS APPROACHING AT AN INFINITE SPEED, THE HUNTER, KING, HUSBAND, THAT IS QUITE ANOTHER MATTER! There comes a moment when the children who have been playing cops and robbers hush suddenly: was that a real footstep in the hall? There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion ('Man's search for God') suddenly draw back. Supposing we

really found Him? We never meant it to come to *that!* Worse still, supposing He had found us?"

THIS IS WHY PEOPLE DENY THAT GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF HISTORICALLY IN EMPIRICALLY WITNESSED DEEDS . . . OR PERSONALLY IN JESUS CHRIST . . . HE IS, THEN, THE LIVING GOD!

II. GOD REVEALED HIMSELF IN WORDS—IN HUMAN LANGUAGE

A. A verbal revelation is necessary

1. Some historical events lend themselves to interpretation by the innate capabilities of the mind of man alone (Rom. 1, etc.)
2. Most events, however, must be interpreted by God to man in a verbal communication if man is to understand their revelatory nature.
3. Revelation then consists of event and interpretation. God acts in history and discloses by words the meaning of His acts.
4. The interpretation of the prophets, of Jesus Christ and of the apostles of what God has done in History is itself a part of the revelatory situation.
5. God communicated in words to Adam even before Eve was created (Gen. 2:15-17)—God gave Adam the ability to use language and name the animals before Eve was created (Gen. 2:20).

B. The nature of language as a medium of revelation

1. Written words have the same validity as the actual words of the speaker and this is shown by the fact that written words are admissible as evidence in a court of law, carrying the same weight as those of a living and present witness.
2. Speech, as defined by Wm. J. Martin, "is the act by which the speaker provides with perceptible garments the invisible offspring (thoughts) of his mind."
3. Language makes the communication of thoughts possible by providing verbal "deputies" for the

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ingredients of many situations.

4. By language it is possible also for a speaker to superimpose his will on another, and thus it becomes possible for the Holy Spirit to superimpose His will upon us and within us through a verbal revelation.
 5. Language makes possible even the communication of inaccessible matter (the supernatural wisdom and plan of God, which would be inaccessible if He did not speak it to us in language).
 6. Language is necessary even for the mind of man to communicate with itself, for the mind is never completely happy until it has reduced its problems to linguistic terms.
- C. Existential theology denies that God can or will reveal Himself propositionally (that is, they affirm that God does not reveal Himself verbally, through words, but by direct confrontation, subjectively) — BUT
1. We cannot have the knowledge of God without the knowledge *about* God!! anymore than we can have a knowledge of our wives or children without a knowledge *about* them!
 2. We cannot claim the transcendent experience, the oneness of the soul with God, without the truth that God gives of Himself in the saving events of history, the truth of which comes to us by historical media.
 3. Christian faith is not hung on a sky-hook but is founded securely in fact. One senses that the writers of the N.T. were terribly empirically minded. The fact-basis of faith is everywhere apparent in Scripture.
 4. Faith without truth is impossible! and that truth is not some ether that haunts the atmosphere or the brain but something that is the function of statements and that grasps us when there is conveyed that which is actually the case.
 5. To be personal means to be a self, a rational self, a moral self, and a purposing self. Man is both intellectual and moral. The one cannot be separated from

the other. Response to the truth is moral as well as intellectual. Therefore there must be propositional truth in verbal form before there can be either an intellectual or moral confrontation with God!!

6. Confrontation involves the meeting of minds, of common response to one another—in the truth. The confrontation of persons involves the communication of truth. Truth is a function of language!

D. Language and Personal Encounter

1. Events (nature, history) cannot bring about the personal encounter which the genius of language alone can accomplish.
2. By means of the sense of hearing, as the receiver of verbal communication, one mind can make contact with the mental world of another mind and can influence that inaccessible and mysterious realm of thought.
3. Further, with the voluntary cooperation of the recipient, one may learn in turn something about the contents of that other mind.
4. Without such voluntary cooperation and without communication **THERE IS AN IMPENETRABLE BOUNDARY TO PERSONAL ENCOUNTER . . .** this is exactly what Paul says in I Cor. 2:11 . . . “For what person knows a man’s thought except the spirit of the man which is in him?” The mind of the man sitting next to you may be quite inaccessible to you, while at that very moment a friend a 1000 miles away may be allowing you, by means of a letter, to learn something of what is beyond this boundary . . . the act of crossing this boundary is one of the most remarkable phenomena of our experience.
5. If God willed to cross this boundary, He could surely do so by the existing means so extensively used between man and man. This is what the Psalmist infers in Psal. 94:8ff . . . If God made the eye, He can see . . .”
AND IF GOD MADE THE TONGUE, HE CAN TALK!

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- E. The Bible leaves us in no doubt whatever that the vehicle of revelation is language (words).
1. Language is versatile: it is unique in the reception and transmission of knowledge; it is the only means which possesses such potentiality.
 2. Mystical communication, in which the intellect is in abeyance and the object of the participant is to merge himself by a non-verbal process in the Godhead, is excluded by a word often on the lips of the writers of the O.T. The word is translated "to hear," and signifies not only to hear, but "to understand" and even "to respond" to what is said.
 3. There are literally thousands of references in both O.T. and N.T. representing God as "speaking" words (cf. Ex. 20:1; Deut. 1:6; Psa. 33:9; Jer. 7:13; 14:14; Jn. 6:63; Mt. 24:35; Jn. 17:14, 17).
 4. Language is the only conceivable means of communicating non-empirical places, things or concepts (heaven, hell, remission of sins). It has the ability to cross dimensional limits of time, space, etc., and communicate by verbal deputies (figures of speech, analogies, etc.) the non-experienceable. It has the ability to bring about PERSONAL ENCOUNTER, I Cor. 2:13.
 5. Yet language is inadequate to describe the ultimate realities of such things as heaven, hell, etc. ON THE OTHER HAND, INADEQUACY DOES NOT MEAN ERRONEOUSNESS. Paul was "caught up into the third heaven and heard things it was impossible for him to utter." (II Cor. 12:1-4) We do not believe the book of Revelation's description of heaven is in any ultimate sense, adequate, yet it is adequate enough in its relative sense to engender love, faith and purpose in the believer's heart.

III. GOD REVEALED HIMSELF IN A PERSON, HIS UNIQUE SON, JESUS CHRIST

A. Because God is personal, the final revelation of Himself was a Person.

1. Heb. 1:1-4, In times past God revealed Himself in many ways, and through many servants (prophets), but in the last dispensation He has revealed Himself in the Son. This Son is: Heir, Co-Creator, Glory of God, Express Image of His Person, Sustainer, Majesty on High.

2. John 1:1-18, The Third Person of the God-head became Incarnate and "tabernacled" among men. Men beheld His glory as of the only unique Son from the face-to-face presence with the Father. No man has seen God at any time, but the Son has declared Him (exegesatos) "exegeted" Him.

3. Phil. 2:5-10, God took upon Himself the form of a man and suffered the death of the cross, revealing the love of God.

4. II Cor. 5:19, God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.

5. Heb. 10:4-10, He came in a body prepared for Him to do the will of God willingly, and by that will we are sanctified.

6. His name is Immanuel ("God with us"), Matt. 1:23.

B. The Son of God became Incarnate and *acted* in history and *spoke* exactly and exclusively the very words God willed Him to speak!! Luke says his gospel document is a "treatise . . . of all that Jesus began both to do and teach . . ." Acts 1:1.

1. Jesus lived and taught the love of God perfectly.

2. Jesus lived and taught the compassion of God perfectly.

3. Jesus lived and taught the righteousness of God perfectly.

C. The most important statement of Jesus concerning His personal revelation of the Father is found in John 14:7-11.

"If ye had known me, ye should have known my

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Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

CONCLUSION

I. PERSONAL REVELATION INVOLVES DECISION, RESPONSE TO THE PERSONAL GOD

- A. God meets man in the act of revelation not as an Idea, an Unmoved Mover, but as a PERSON who speaks to man and requires a response from man.
- B. To say that revelation is historical, verbal and personal means, in brief, that God has come into our midst and because He has so come, we can never remain the same as we were before.

II. JESUS CHRIST IS GOD IN THE FLESH, "HEAR YE HIM!"

- A. "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Col. 2:9
- B. Do you want to know what God thinks? Read the words of Jesus and the apostles.
- C. Do you want to know how God acts? Look at the life Jesus lived.
- D. Do you want to know what God thinks of man? Read the Bible.

- E. Do you want to know what God promises to men of faith and obedience? Read the New Testament!
- F. Do you want to know what God commands man to do? Read the New Testament!

III. AT THE END OF THIS AGE GOD IS GOING TO REVEAL HIMSELF ONCE AGAIN

- A. Historically, Verbally, Personally
- B. I Thess. 4:16ff; II Thess. 1:7-10; Titus 2:13; I Jn. 3:1-3; Jn. 14:1-6; Acts 1:9-11

IV. WHAT IS YOUR DECISION? GOD HAS REVEALED HIMSELF TO YOU PERSONALLY, VERBALLY, YOU HAVE HAD A PERSONAL ENCOUNTER WITH GOD HERE, NOW!

HIS PERSONAL INVITATION TO YOU IS COME, RECEIVE, OBEY, TRUST.

THE BIBLE IS HIS LOVE LETTER TO YOU.

2. SOVEREIGN IN SALVATION, CHAPTER 45

a. OMNIPOTENCE

TEXT: 45:1-8

- 1 Thus saith Jehovah to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open the doors before him, and the gates shall not be shut:
- 2 I will go before thee, and make the rough places smooth; I will break in pieces the doors of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron;
- 3 and I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that it is I, Jehovah, who call thee by thy name, even the God of Israel.
- 4 For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel my chosen, I have called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou