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THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF REVELATION

I

IN these four sessions of the Theological Students Conference¹ it is our task and privilege to examine the Revelation of God from four main standpoints. In the first place we shall establish the basis, which is the concept of revelation itself; secondly we shall examine the content of revelation under its two broad aspects, the sin of man and the Incarnate Son; and finally we shall discuss one special problem in connection with the mode of revelation, that of Inspiration.

This first session brings before us then the basic problem, the Biblical concept of revelation, what is understood by it, and why it is so essential to our whole knowledge of the Living Lord. Our task is twofold, to indicate clearly what is signified by revelation, and to establish revelation as the starting point and the ground of faith. To the accomplishment of this double purpose, it is my intention, not to compose a formal essay, but to indicate, and briefly to discuss, the main questions which arise in connection with revelation, in order that we may have a basis for individual meditation and discussion. One indulgence I crave: it has been the particular request of the Secretary that in these sessions the theology of Barth should be much to the fore, and if at times it seems that it is the Barthian and not the Biblical concept of revelation of which I treat, the responsibility is not wholly mine.

Of the problems which are raised in connection with revelation I see, broadly speaking, eleven, and these eleven we shall now examine in the most logical order possible. The first and obvious problem is this: Is the concept of revelation inherent in the Christian faith, or is it merely a theological accretion, alien to the true spirit of Christianity? At first sight many of us would be tempted to dismiss this question as irrelevant and unnecessary; of course Christianity always did claim to be the Word of the Lord, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. But

¹ Address delivered to theological students at the I.V.F. Conference, Selly Oak, 1940.

when we remember that it has been the whole aim of modern theology to dispense with the element of revelation, or at any rate to reduce it to something unrecognisable as such, then we shall see that this problem is vital. A detailed discussion of the point is obviously impossible at this juncture: it is sufficient to point out that the problem does exist and that we must be prepared to give an answer to it. But even an elementary reading of the New Testament, or of the Scriptures generally, will surely make it abundantly plain that from the very first Christianity claimed to be something more than a new religion, it claimed to be the revelation of God Himself, based upon the prior revelation through the prophets:

“ 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

And I want you to notice one significant point which does not always receive the attention which is its due, but which clearly indicates the truth which we are seeking to establish, namely, that the early Christians held their faith quite easily and naturally within the sphere of another religion, the religion of Judaism.² If we study the Scriptures from beginning to end, there is never any question, or at any rate any prior question, of religion, indeed the word itself hardly occurs. The question is solely that of the revelation of God. That is why the Christian faith is and can claim to be an absolute, not merely a closer approximation to truth, but the truth. But the need is urgent to recognise that this problem has been raised and to think out in our minds a full and adequate answer.

The fact is that in modern times the tendency has been to gravitate farther and farther away from the primitive point of view. In spite of the early witness, the element of revelation has been distorted or ignored by the theologian of the present age. Christianity is presented, not as transcendental, God's own revelation of Himself, but as something belonging to earth, the highest and purest religious system so far. Consequently our appreciation of its uniqueness has been weakened, and in many cases completely lost. There seems to be little reason why a man should be a Christian and not a Mohammedan or a Buddhist, except that the conceptions of Christianity appeal

¹ Hebrews i. 1-2.

² Cf. Acts ii. 46, iii. 1, etc.

to us as the most advanced. Certainly there is no reason why Christianity should not one day be superseded by some purer and higher faith. This tendency, the one which has given rise to this first problem, is one against which the true Christian needs to be constantly on his guard. How easy it is to begin speaking about the superiority of the Christian faith, when one should speak about its otherness! There is a need for particular care at this point, because in one sense there is truth in the conception, and unless the matter is closely considered we shall fall into the same confusion which prevails in so many quarters. A Christian has a religion as well as a faith in God's Word. He is a religious man as well as a man of faith. The revelation of God comes to us in this world and in our thought and practice it is bound to lead to religion. That is why sooner or later the Christians had to break with Judaism. There are Christian moral codes and Christian ideas of God, which change and develop, which may be compared both with themselves and with those of other religions. But these are not Christianity itself, in its origin and at its very heart. Christianity itself is the revelation of God which He Himself gives to us or else it is nothing. That is the guarantee of its absoluteness.

But if this is the case, then it leads us at once to our second problem: What does the Bible understand by this self-revelation of God? Perhaps this problem could best be tackled by first clearing the ground and stating what the Bible does not understand. The Bible quite clearly and definitely does not understand by revelation man's unveiling of God. The Bible is only incidentally, and often not even that, the story of man's search after God. It is rather the story of the fleeing Adam whom God Himself is seeking, how God Himself has come to man in the depths of his ignorance and sin, how God has made Himself known to man and walked and talked with him. We may study any book of the Bible from any period and we shall find that this is true. The Bible is nowhere the history of the thought of man about God, but it is the history of the dealings of God with man. Modern scholarship has calmly and blatantly ignored this fact, and attempted to extract from the Bible a history of man's thought about God, served up under the pseudo-Christian title of progressive revelation. From a point of view of pure scholarship, there is nothing illegitimate here, that is to say if the sole end is to establish what the man of the eighth or twentieth

century B.C. thought about God. The Bible may be used for this purpose. But to incorporate these results into a so-called Christian dogmatic system is in the highest degree futile. It is a building upon the non-essential. That which matters in the Bible is the way of God with man, and throughout the Bible this self-revealing of God is expressed in the concept of Word. God's Revelation is the Word of God to man. To pick out one or two examples at random, in the garden of Eden we find that God makes Himself known to man by the divine self-communication of Word, God speaks with man. In the stories of the patriarchs, God speaks with man again, this time not directly, but usually by means of dreams and visions. At the Mount of Sinai, where the law is given in all the glory and the majesty of God, God speaks through the written tables. Through the history of the chosen people, the prophets, both speaking and writing, are the mouthpiece of God: Thus saith the Lord. Finally, of course, God spoke again in completion of His revelation, the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, the Word became the Emmanuel, God talking with us, God living with us, God dying for us. In the Bible the revelation of God is the Word of God.

II

But is this Word of God necessary? In the light of what has gone before this third question may seem to be redundant, but it is a pressing and an unescapable one. Even more so than the first, it is crucial. Upon it the whole concept of revelation depends. Modern theology has rejected the concept of revelation, of absolute revelation, not because it is demonstrably alien to the Christian faith, but because the modern thinker sees no necessity for it. Modern theology regards man as quite capable of finding God by his own devices. For the theologian of the new age, the knowledge of God depends, not upon God but upon man. God may be known, either through the thought of man, or through his aesthetic susceptibilities and poetic emotions, or through his religious instincts. This knowledge is not a revealing act on the part of God, but a process within the mind and the heart of man. It is not something absolute and final, it is rather fluid and progressive. It is this knowledge which for purposes of Christian theology has been given the deceptive and quite meaningless name of progressive revelation.

But this is not truly revelation at all, nor is it the knowledge of God. A man may no doubt have his own rational ideas of God; he may have his own aesthetic and poetic emotions; he may subscribe religious beliefs and practices—indeed it is unavoidable that man, even the Christian man should do these things—but God, the true God, is not known in these ways. The philosopher who proves God is not proving, he is not even talking about, God at all; what he discusses and proves is an abstraction of his own mind. In the Bible there is no attempt made to prove God. The poet who experiences God is enjoying a product of his own imaginative feelings. In the Bible God never appears as an individual aesthetic experience. The religious man who worships a God of creeds and moral codes and tradition is worshipping an ideal or conception of God, either his own or that of others. In the Bible the religious man is always the farthest from God. In all these cases there is one common principle which marks them out from the true knowledge of God. It is not God who is the Lord, but the autonomous self. God is a mere object of thought, feeling or religious instinct, with no existence at all except in the mind of him who thinks or feels or worships. This is in a word idolatry.

God Himself, the true God, cannot be known in this way. It is quite impossible that He should. It is impossible for two reasons. First, because God is the Creator and we are the creatures. In the frantic attempt to establish the identity of God with man, on the score of immanence, this distinction is one which is often overlooked in this day. But it is a real one nevertheless. God as the Creator is not necessarily remote and inaccessible: indeed the Scriptures testify to His original interest in, and relationship with, His creatures. But God as the Creator can never be the object of our thought. He can only be known as subject. And unless it had pleased Him to make Himself known, He would have been beyond our reach altogether. A feeble comparison from human life may perhaps serve to illustrate this point. We do not even know a fellow-man except as he gradually makes himself known by words and actions. We have our conception of him, but it is not knowledge of the true man. If this is the case with fellow-creatures, how much more so with the Creator, who belongs to a different category of being, who cannot even be apprehended by sense, who is the Absolute and self-sufficient One, who is always the Subject and

we all the objects. The object never comprehends the subject, but the subject the object. That is why, for example, the philosophical problem of the existence of God is insoluble and ultimately futile, why it is completely ignored in the Bible, and why we need not particularly concern ourselves if it is shown that the ontological or some other argument breaks down at some particular point. Even the finest philosopher cannot by his philosophising find out God. He can and probably will create his own God, either in person or principle, as the Materialists have so ably shown us once more, but he cannot alone rise beyond that to the true God who is the Lord and Master.

Secondly, it is impossible that God should be known in these ways because God is holy and man is fallen and sinful. At the first, according to the original plan of creation, there can be little doubt but that God was clearly and sufficiently revealed in a general way, in the Word of Creation. Original man, that is to say, man the creature that God intended him to be, did not merely have his own idea of God: he knew God. In spite of the gulf Creator-creature, he could talk with God easily and naturally. This was still revelation—there was a revelation, a Word of Creation, which was the Lord Jesus,—but it was revelation within the natural order of being, not the special revelation of miracle. But with the Fall this simple natural knowledge of God was destroyed by sin. Man rose up in pride to establish his own lordship, to know without or even in spite of God, to make himself the subject and all else the object and the autonomous reason of man, seeking to enslave all things to itself, obliterated the general knowledge of the Creator God. This revelation still exists. It is restored with the restoration of man. The Christian can once again recognise the handiwork of his Saviour in the works of heaven and earth. But sinful man for the most part can no longer hear even this first Word of God. By nature other than God, he is now no longer even the friend of God, but an alien and a stranger, alienated in his mind by wicked works. Except God speaks to him a second word, he can have no knowledge of God at all.

Two things are clear. In the first place it is quite clear even from the very attempts of philosophy and religion, that man was made by God for God. In the second, it is equally clear that man is separated from God by a great gulf which no man can cross from this side. The highest and noblest efforts

of man only serve to show the radical nature of this gulf. God is not known by human effort. Unless He chooses to make Himself known to sinners in a new way, there is no knowledge of Him at all. This is an impasse into which modern thought, and modern materialist thought, has again driven us by showing so clearly the human origin of all philosophic and religious speculations. But it is an impasse everywhere presumed in the Scriptures: No man hath seen God at any time. The need is for the divine self-revealing, for One to declare Him.

III

Has man even the capacity for divine revelation, sinful man, that is to say? That is our next question, and it is one, which, although at first it may appear to be somewhat trifling, is really of sufficient importance to merit discussion. It is over this problem that Barth and Brunner have parted company. Barth maintains that man is so utterly lost and helpless that he cannot even receive the divine revelation except by a prior work of God within him. The relationship of man with God has not only been broken, but utterly annihilated, and as for the original *imago Dei*, sinful man might just as well be a cat as a man, without the grace of God. Brunner, on the other hand, although agreeing that man can do nothing of himself either to earn or to achieve revelation, maintains that man has at least the capacity to receive it when given, just as a drowning man has the capacity to clutch at a life-buoy if someone chooses or is able to put it within his grasp. Man when confronted with the divine revelation is himself responsible. He cannot save himself but he can either choose salvation or reject it. At root this is the old discussion between an extreme Calvinism and a more moderate, and it is one upon which the Scriptures give us little explicit guidance. My own conviction, for what it is worth, is this, that the whole question is one in which the answer will be determined by the point of approach. In one sense it is hard to follow Barth. How can we agree that man has no capacity for revelation, when quite clearly the Scriptures exhort us to choice? On the other hand, the Scriptures seem to indicate, and experience agrees, that Revelation, offered freely to all in Jesus Christ, is only of avail in the heart in which there has been a prior work of the Holy Spirit. No man can say of Him-

self that Jesus is the Christ. It is the sinner (and the preacher) who feels the responsibility of choice; the believer rejoices in the grace which led him to the Saviour.

Granted that Revelation is necessary, how is it that the revelation of God is gifted to man? Already this fifth question has been answered in a general sense: revelation is the divine self-communication, a word which is spoken. But by what means is this spoken? For a truly masterly analysis of this problem one cannot do better than read the early sections of Barth's *Dogmatik* I.: "Die Lehre des Worts Gottes,"¹ in which the Word of God is reviewed under its three forms; the Word written, the Scriptures, the Word spoken, preaching, and the Word revealed, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. The Bible itself clearly indicates the three means of revelation. First, Jesus is Himself the Word. Wherever the Word of God is spoken, it is Jesus who speaks and it is Jesus who is the subject of speech: it is Jesus. Second, the Word is proclaimed through the lips of ministers and prophets, pointing to Jesus. All spoken prophecy, inspired of God, all preaching based upon the written Word, is the Word of God. Third, the Word is written in a book as a permanent record, a book whose authors wrote, not under the inspiration of poetry or art alone, but under the direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God. It is Jesus who comes to us as the Word of God, either directly, or mediated through the Word preached or the Word written.

But is there a general revelation over and above this special revelation? This is a question which at some time or another all of us are bound to ask. One man claims to know God without any such Word, spoken, written or revealed. Another claims that in some other book or preaching he has received his knowledge of God. Can it truly be asserted that there is only the one revelation? Or must we admit that God does speak in other ways, through other religious books or leaders to other peoples? If it is a matter of the revelation of grace, then we must assert that that revelation is unique and once for all, or else that it is not revelation at all. But already we have seen that prior to the special revelation of grace, there is a general revelation of God to man in the word of Creation, a revelation referred to by St. Paul in the first chapter of Romans (cf. Romans i. 19-20). This revelation is not apart from Jesus

¹ *Dogmatics* I: The Doctrine of the Word of God.

Christ, indeed it was by Jesus the Word that God created the heavens and the earth.¹ There is also a general revelation of God in conscience, the knowledge of right and wrong, which, with certain variations, which may be attributed to the debasing of conscience by sin, is common to every race of men.² Where then fragments of these words of God in creation and conscience still remain, as they do throughout the world, it may be asserted that God does speak, although there is, of course, no question of the clear absolute voice of revelation in Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. Even where the name of Jesus has never been preached, we have every reason to believe that God is not without a witness: the Word of God is still in some sense proclaimed, and although this is a matter of which we are ignorant, I myself am persuaded that there are by God's grace those, who, feeling their unworthiness and sinfulness, receive that Word, knowing no other. But, on the other hand, it must always be stressed that this general revelation, although it may be dimly reflected in many religious books, is not a revelation through systems and beliefs, which are man-made. It is distinct from all religion and religious thought. It *is* general. Belief in a general revelation must not blind us to the fact that the claims of all the religions are spurious except in so far as they do witness to this general revelation.

IV

If there is then a general revelation in creation and conscience, a further question arises: Has God quite suddenly given to man a special and distinct revelation of Grace, or has he led fallen man gradually and progressively from the general to the particular knowledge of Himself? Apologists of the Christian faith in general assert the latter view. They build upon the general revelation of God the Creator, proceeding to show how with this as a basis God has laboriously led men to a full knowledge of Himself in Jesus Christ. The argument is usually buttressed with long comparisons of the religious conceptions of Abraham with those of Paul, and finally with those of the modern theologian, always to the great advantage of the latter. But this is from first to last a miserable confusion. It is a miserable confusion from a double point of view. First, because it ignores the fact that the revelation of grace, far from

¹ Cf. John i. 3, Col. i. 16.

² Cf. Rom. ii. 14, 15.

amplifying the general revelation, replaces it. By fallen man God cannot be known first, or solely as the Creator. It is as the Saviour who meets our needs that we first know Him if we are to know Him at all. No man, says Jesus, cometh unto the Father but by me.¹ That is why, if there is any knowledge of God through general revelation, it is restricted to those who feel their inadequacy and need. Second, because it fails to distinguish between the religious and moral conceptions of man and the revelation of God. If it is the former that we are studying, then no doubt progress, or at any rate development, movement, can be traced. Paul did not think like Abraham, nor did he think like the Christian, real or spurious, of to-day. Even the thought of the individual changes within the course of a life-time. But the Word of God does not change. The Word of God is in every case the same, complete and final. At one time one aspect of the Word may receive greater prominence, now Law and Righteousness, now Love and Mercy (although even this may be exaggerated), but God spoke to Abraham as He spoke to Paul, as He speaks to men and women all the world over. God's revelation is always of Himself as the Judge and as the Saviour. God's revelation never changes, never can change, because it is Himself that He reveals, not some thought upon or conception of Himself. Our imperfect thought is bound to grow and change, but the Word of God stands fast and abides for ever.² If we would know God, then we can know Him equally in Genesis and St. John: it is still the Lord Jesus that we see as the Saviour, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Did not Abraham by faith look forward to the day of the Lord Jesus and rejoice,³ as we look backward and rejoice?

But how can we be sure that the special revelation of God, the Word of Grace, is given to us in the Scriptures, and in preaching based upon the Scriptures, and not in some other sacred book or preaching? Do not other systems claim, even if less categorically, to be a revelation of God? This question is one which presses particularly in our own day, when comparative religion has shown how closely in some respects the Bible resembles other religious books. Is it after all a mere matter of opinion? One man asserts that his book is the Word of God, another his, and both are to some extent right and both wrong. But the Word of God cannot be a matter of opinion, either it

¹ John xiv. 6.² Cf. Isa. xl. 8.³ John viii. 56.

is the Word of God or not, and notice this fact; that whereas the Mohammedan or the Buddhist could concede this point without loss, and honour Jesus as one prophet and teacher amongst others, the Christian cannot do so. Once he renounces the claim to an exclusive revelation in the Divine Son reducing Jesus to the level of others, he renounces everything.

How then can the claim be made good? First it must be admitted that this is a claim which cannot be substantiated by reason and logic, since the Word of God, although not irrational, transcends reason. How then? Primarily of course it is a claim which cannot be made good; it is a statement of faith. The Word of God is either heard and understood, or else it is not heard and not understood. To say that Jesus is the Lord is to say something which cannot be proved, but which can only be known by faith. Only a believer can know the Word of God. The natural man perceiveth not the things of the Spirit; they are foolishness unto him,¹ and he finds the Bible, instead of the Word of God to his soul, a very dull book. This is knowledge which cannot be conveyed in the ordinary way; the Christian knows Christ as the Word, because he has taken God at His Word and found Him true. He knows that this is the revelation of God and that there is and can be no other. In confirmation he has the inner witness of the spirit.

But is this all that we can say? Not quite. There are two other considerations which may and must be borne in mind, both of which will be found helpful when a study of comparative religions raises this problem. In the first place the Christian revelation is demonstrably unique. Fancied incarnations there have been by the score, but never such an one as that of Jesus. The incarnate gods of the mythologies jostle one another, but they do not exclude one another. Jesus, the humble peasant, who died on a cross of wood, calmly and unostentatiously excludes them all. The teachers of all the ages vie with each other, claiming this authority and that, but Jesus, claiming what no other dare, his own authority, with neither boast nor pride excludes them all. And of all the deities it is Jesus alone who is truly the Saviour, the sin-bearing God, the crucified Redeemer as well as the Risen Lord of Glory, the humble peasant as well as the triumphant King, the hidden man as well as God the revealed.

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Secondly, the knowledge of God in Jesus Christ is a dialogue in which God is the other speaker. If we read the works of Mahomet, there is still the aspect of dialogue, but it is Mahomet himself who is the other speaker. And for Mahomet himself, in spite of dreams and visions, the work is a monologue. But with the Scriptures this is not so. Of course the Scriptures too may be read in this way, to see what the writers think, but if we read them only in this way, then we do not truly read them at all. It is not what the writers think that matters, even to themselves, but what God says. The man who reads the scriptures truly takes part in a dialogue with God; God shows to him his sin; God points him to the Saviour; he must respond either Yes or No. That is why the Scriptures may be read by any man of any age and still retain their urgent, living message.

This fact leads us on to the further problem: Is the revelation of God purely subjective, what God says to me at a given moment, or, to put it in another way, what I see of God at a given moment? Obviously men could meet with Jesus when He was alive, and men can still read the Bible, without receiving the Word of God. We ourselves, all of us, have often read the Bible, and God has spoken to us not a word. At other times we have glimpsed the very fulness of God in the sacred page. Must we then conclude that the Bible, that Jesus Himself, are only the Word of God in so far as God opens them to us, not in an objective and fixed way, but subjectively, as God speaks through them to us?

V

Amongst the Barthians there are some extremists who hold this view, maintaining that what matters is not a person, not a book, but the Word of God through these instruments. The instruments themselves may even be imperfect and outmoded; in the case of Jesus perhaps even illusory, the product of Folk-phantasy. Neither the Bible nor Jesus as such may be termed the Word of God. But God reveals them to me as the Word in my own experience, and in that sense they may truly be termed the Word of God. This view, however, shared to some extent by Brunner the radical scholar, is perverse and confusing. The truth is rather the very contrary: God's revelation is always objectively present in Christ, the Bible and faithful preaching,

but the eyes of our understanding are not always open to perceive it. The work of the Holy Spirit is not to lighten up Christ or the Bible or preaching to us, but to open our eyes to Christ, the Bible and the faithful word. Already we have the Word in its objective form: the work of the Holy Spirit is to make it the living word subjectively, to me.

But this work of the Holy Spirit is a necessary work, as Barth and his followers have once again emphasised. Too often a dead orthodoxy has been content to look upon the Bible as God's Word solely in an objective sense, with the dreary result of making of the Bible a book of recipes for the concoction of spiritual puddings. Do we not all tend to slip into that easy view? That we only need to open our Bibles and it is all there, like an A.A. route to Heaven, that we only need to look at Jesus and all is somehow well. But the Bible cannot be read like that, nor can Jesus be seen like that. The spiritual understanding must be opened before Jesus can speak with us and show us Himself as the Saviour and Friend and King.

With this question is bound up of course the larger question of the Word of God as history, but a discussion of this point is barely practicable in the space of this session. All that can be done here is to state the main points as simply and baldly as possible, in order that we may be aware of them for individual consideration:

1. That the Word of Salvation, to be of any value to man at all, had necessarily to be uttered in this world, that is to say, within the ordinary course of historical events.
2. That it must therefore have a normal place within the process of history, and quite apart from its revelational significance, be open to interpretation and assessment as history, or even in the case of the Bible as literature.
3. That its divine significance is real, and always present, but that it remains an incognito for man, who is blinded and hardened by sin.
4. That it is only as the Holy Spirit opens the eyes of our understanding that we see the other gracious eternal aspect of these historical events, knowing

in the Bible the written Word, in Jesus the Incarnate Son, in the cross the bearing of human sin and in the empty tomb the Resurrection.

One last problem must be touched upon before we close, and that is the pressing individual problem: How does God speak to the individual, and what does He say? I suppose that in the lives of all Christians there are times of weakness when they wonder whether they have truly heard the Word of God, in their hearts. They have heard sermons, and perhaps enjoyed them. They have read the Scriptures, and seem to have some measure of understanding. They have learned the doctrine and not withheld their approval. But has God really spoken to them, God Himself? If so, how can they be sure? How would God speak to them, and what would he say?

God's way of speaking to individuals is never exactly the same, but always it is through Jesus. It may be that God gives a direct vision of Himself, as in the case of Paul, but that is not the usual way. More likely, God has taken some text or passage of Scripture, some exposition of Scripture, and applied it so forcibly to the individual need that it could not but be recognised that this was not merely the voice of a man but in very truth the voice of God.

But to what part of man did and does God speak? To the mind? Certainly God does speak to the mind, but the Word of God is more than a new system of thought. And it is so simple that the simplest mind may understand it. To the emotions? God speaks to the emotions, but the Word of God is more than mere feeling, more than a great emotional upheaval. In many cases God's Word does produce such an upheaval, as always in some measure it reorientates the thought of a man, but it need not, and feeling is not the test of God's speaking. To the will? God speaks also to the will, and perhaps to the will most of all, so that we know that our way of life is set in question and that decision is called for. But the Word of God itself is more than a calling for decision. The Word of God comes to the whole man, all that he is. When a man hears the Word of God he can never be the same again, either for good or for ill, whether he receives or rejects. As a person, God speaks to the person. He does not come merely with clever arguments or stirring pictures or persuasive appeals.

His voice may be still and small, but He speaks to the whole man within us, the very centre of our being, the heart, and with that heart, that centre of being, that whole man we must respond. Faith is the totality act of the whole man, the response of mind, emotion, will, everything to the Word of God.

And if that is how God speaks to us, what is it that He says? We can know that it is indeed God who speaks to us by what is said, since the Word of God is unique and it is always the same. First, God addresses man as a sinner, showing him the worthlessness and the blindness of his life, pointing out to him the inevitable doom of sin. He invites the response of repentance. Then He points man to the Saviour. If Jesus the Holy Son of God is a rebuke to the sinner, He is also the sin-bearing Saviour, upon whom has been laid the sin of the world. And in Jesus God points man to the way of Grace, promising eternal life as a member of the new and heavenly family. He invites the response of faith.

“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”¹

The man who knows the meaning of these words, acknowledging them in his heart, knows the revelation of God.

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¹ Isa. liii. 6.