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I. THE OBJECT AND SCOPE OF WRITTEN REVELATION.

WE use the term Revelation, in its wider signification, as the name of the Sacred Scriptures, and as implying divine authority for the whole, just as we call the whole the Word of God. Both of these names imply the orthodox view of inspiration. We shall assume that the book is as distinctly divine as if it all were actually revealed, while it is as distinctly human as if it all were of human origin. It is the analogue of the Incarnate Word, in whom perfect divinity and inerrant humanity meet in one person—the God-man. While it is not the purpose at this time to discuss this view, it will, no doubt, appear incidentally that no other working hypothesis is so satisfactory as this, no matter what inductions we seek to make from the Scriptures.

Writing looks to permanent preservation in unvarying form, and carries authority when duly authenticated. The “Ten Words” were written on tables of stone by the finger of God, and kept in the ark of the testimony under the most awful sanctions. Moses wrote his law in a book, and put it either in or beside the ark for a witness. Samuel wrote the “manner of the kingdom” in a book. Christ said to Satan, “It is written.”

There is no difference of opinion here. Nor is it important to settle whether there were previous writings from which much of the earlier books of revelation was taken, nor how far such writings may have been inspired.

It is now popular to say that the Scriptures are a growth, a de-

V. THE PRE-INCARNATE CHRIST.

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.” (Hebrews i. 1-4.)

“Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts.” (Malachi iii. 1.) “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” (Mark i. 1, 2.)

“I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. When there were no depths, I was brought forth; when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, was I brought forth: while as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth; when he established the clouds above; when he strengthened the fountains of the deep; when he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment; when he appointed the foundations of the earth: then I was by him, as one brought up with him; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men.” (Proverbs viii. 23-31.)

These words of Scripture, taken in their logical sequence and connection, give us some insight into the character and conduct of the pre-incarnate Christ. We are not as apt to think of him in this light as were our predecessors. "The Angel of the Covenant" was a common and fruitful theme among those, who have "gone hence, to be no more." Students will find very attractive and instructive sermons on this subject among the writings of Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Payson; and if such men as these found the theme fruitful to their minds and very precious to their souls, we may rest assured, that with a similar reverence, we may do the same.

We are apt to think of our Saviour as only beginning to take an active, personal interest in the welfare of men when he himself became a man. There are many who seem to lose sight of the fact, that he was, and that he revealed himself to men, long before he was born as the babe of Bethlehem. In doing this, he sometimes assumed the form of a man, and sometimes the form of an angel. If he was the second Person of the Trinity, of course he must have been in existence before he became a human being. "Before Abraham was, I am," was the strange paradox that startled the minds, and kindled into wrath the bad tempers of the Jews, who were ready to stone him to death for blasphemy. But if he was God, as well as man, "two distinct natures and one person," there can be no doubt that he lived before Abraham was born.

But in the paragraph above, from the eighth chapter of Proverbs, there is something more than the divine nature predicated of the one who is there called "Wisdom." He is represented as looking on at the creation of this "cosmos," this order of things, with a profound and lively interest in all that concerned the creation of the world and the welfare of men. Even the earth itself, the physical earth, as it came out of chaos into perfect order and beauty, as the future abode of men, was an object of the deepest and truest and tenderest delight. And when men were created, and the world no longer a waste and howling wilderness, his "delights were with the sons of men."

He had the companionship of God the Father, and of God the Holy Spirit, and there were hosts of holy, unfallen angels who

were ever circling around the throne of this Triune God, ready to worship or to serve any one of these three coördinate persons, with equal adoration and delight. There were some of these angels too, who had sinned and fallen; and had it suited the plans and purposes of the Godhead, he might have assumed "the nature of angels," and not "the seed of Abraham." There was a whole universe of stars and systems, which we look upon and love to look upon in unbounded admiration and delight. These were worthy of his notice, and they must have received his constant, unwearied providential care.

But while he was mindful of all these, and never neglected the smallest meteor, but kept it in its eccentric orbit, he seems to lay special stress on the fact that he "rejoiced in the habitable part of his earth," and that "his delights were with the sons of men." And this means, that before he became a man, he rejoiced in the habitable parts of this earth, on which, one of these days, he was to become a man; and that he, in advance, felt a special delight in all that concerned the creation and salvation of the race of man, as the inhabitants of this earth.

I. "Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth." What is the meaning of that strange expression, and why was it a source of joy to the pre-incarnate Son of God? In general we may say, Because he knew that this earth was to be the scene of his own human life, and of the most fearful tragedy that could ever be enacted.

He knew that the garden of Eden, for a time, was to be the happy home of a holy man and woman, married of God, as the progenitors of the whole human race. He knew that Satan would enter that innocent home, and leave the trail of the serpent on all that was fair to look upon. He knew, that driven away in sin and shame, these once holy beings would need a divine Redeemer; and that from the millions of their offspring, a vast multitude had been given to him, in the "covenant of grace." He knew each one of these by name; when they would be born, and where; and when and where they should be "born again." "Known unto God are all his works, in all places of his dominion."

We can conceive, then, of this Being, this Person of the God-

head, who, in the fulness of the time, was to become a man, as moving about from place to place, and looking, in advance, upon what was to take place there in the future. Here, to his omniscient mind, appeared the place where the garden of Eden was to be planted. Here was the very dust out of which he would create the body of Adam. Here was where he would cause a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and, under that first anæsthetic, perform the first surgical operation, by taking out a rib which he would fashion into a woman, a help meet for the lonely man. Here he would create the forbidden tree, and there is the spot where they would try in vain to hide away their shame. Here is where Cain will erect his altar, and there is where Abel will erect his. Here is where Abel will fall a victim of Adam's sin, imputed to Cain, and working out so soon in death, and there is where Cain will go forth with a brand upon his brow, horrid type of what has followed ever since. Here is the spot from which Enoch will be translated, after taking his last walk with God on earth. Here is where Noah will establish his ship-yard for the building of the ark. Here is where Abraham will offer Isaac. Here is where Esau will be defrauded by Jacob, and there is where Jacob will see the vision of the ladder. Here is where he will meet his brother, and there is where he and I will wrestle all night long, until he becomes Israel. Here is where Joseph will be sold, and there is where he will confront his guilty brethren. Here is where my own chosen people shall swarm, like locusts, over the land of Goshen. Here is where Moses shall lie hidden in the ark of bulrushes, and there is where I will talk to him out of the burning bush. Here is where he shall lead the people across the Red Sea, and there is where I will give him the Decalogue. Here is the wilderness around which they shall be led for forty years, and where they shall set up the tabernacle, and get ready for the land of promise. There is where Moses shall die, and there will I bury him in a grave never to be known; and there Joshua shall lead the people across the Jordan to the land of covenant.

And thus, coming on down the ages, we can conceive of this pre-incarnate Christ, "rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth," in advance of all the historic events which he foreknew would

occur at all these spots, whose names and deeds are recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures. And then, we can conceive of him as standing in the khan of Bethlehem, and looking upon the very spot where he was to be born the "Son of Mary." And from there he would go on to Nazareth, where he would be subject to his human parents; and from there to the Jordan, where he was to be baptized; and to the wilderness, where he was to be tempted of the devil. And thus, we may follow him during the three years of his public ministry; and toward the close of that short, but eventful life, we can conceive of him, as in advance, he went from Bethany to Jerusalem; from the Passover to the garden of Gethsemane; from Pilate to Herod; and from Herod back again to Pilate; from the trial to the crucifixion; from the cross to the sepulchre, and from the sepulchre back again to glory. All these places, and all these events, were known to him from the beginning; and we can easily see why it was that he took pleasure in all "these habitable parts of his earth." They were all to be identified, closely, intimately identified with all his own human life, and all the grand results that are to come from that wondrous life and death, as the incarnate Christ.

As merely human beings, we cannot anticipate as certainties what will befall us in the future. But we do love to revisit the places where we have been active participants in events that occurred, it may be, many years ago. Our birthplace, and the graves of our dead; the old home of our childhood; the desk where we first sat at school; the church where we first heard the gospel, and the place where we found a hope in Christ; the pulpit where we preached our first sermon; the place where we were married; and the places where our children were born; the rooms where our loved ones breathed their last; and the very graves, just how they looked, as we turned away with a broken heart. Yes, all these salient, prominent points in our personal history, come back to us, when we sit down and give place to memory.

But all that *would* be prominent in our Saviour's life as a human being was to him known in advance, seen in advance; and hence he was never taken by surprise, as we are. With us, the unexpected is what often happens. With him, all that *would* happen,

or that *could* happen, was expected, because known as a certainty before it did come to pass. And hence, just as we take pleasure in moving amid the scenes that are identified with our past history, so he took delight in moving in advance through scenes that were to be identified with his future history.

It is hard for us to realize and to understand this, because to us the future and what is to be in the future is unknown. We know not what a day may bring forth, and so we are as people who are groping in the dark. The clearest judgment and the wisest foresight cannot foretell what is to be on to-morrow. As Coleridge said:

"In to-day already walks to-morrow."

But the trouble with us is, that we cannot foresee what the causes now in operation are to bring forth hereafter. We can guess at these, but we cannot foretell them as certainties; and many a time we are sadly disappointed.

But the Being who here calls himself "Wisdom" was one Person of the Godhead, and knew all the future as well as he did the past or the present, for with him "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years." "When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," he could look upon this new-created and perfect earth; and to his prophetic mind all the centuries to come, and all the events that were to be crowded into those centuries, were as plain as the lower valley is to us when we stand on a mountain-top. The whole scene, with all its details, was spread out before him as one unique and sublime panorama; and hence "he rejoiced in the habitable part of his earth, and his delights were with the sons of men."

II. "And my delights were with the sons of men." At first blush, or to the casual reader, this may seem strange and unaccountable. For, if he really did foreknow all that would take place, he must have known that Adam and Eve would disobey God, and fall into sin and shame. He must have known that God would curse the very ground on account of the sin; and that they would be driven out, "sinners under the wrath and curse of God." He must have known that, because Adam was the "federal head and representative of the race," "all mankind, descending from

him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him, in his first transgression." Cut off, then, from communion with God and with holy beings, we may well say:

"What was there in us, that could merit esteem,
Or give the Creator delight?
'Twas even so Father, we ever must sing.
For so it seemed good in thy sight."

But while this is true, does the inventor lose all interest in his invention, because, at first, it does not come up to his expectation? The very fact that he is baffled in his hope and expectation makes him more determined and careful to succeed. Does the potter throw away the clay, because the vessel was marred in the making? No; he just lumps up the clay and tries it over again, and succeeds. Does the mother give up the child, because it falls when she is trying to teach it how to walk? Why, the very fact that the little one cannot walk, and is doing its best to walk, inspires her with new hope, greater patience, in a more faithful effort to succeed. Does the doctor turn away in disgust from his patient, because his first efforts do not result in a cure? Not at all. Baffled and disappointed at first, he will go to work with a keener zest and watch with a keener interest each new experiment.

And so it was, in a higher sense, with this divine being in his first great experiment with man as a free agent. "Created in knowledge and holiness, and with dominion over the creatures," man had proven to be a tremendous failure, and might have well merited the contempt of his creator. But there was too much in man, too much of God's image and likeness, for God to let him alone and leave him to perish without hope. In his own freedom of choice he had sinned, and without a Saviour he could not be reclaimed. The one trial was enough to test his obedience, and no other mere trial of that kind would ever be given.

But now comes in another scheme, not for the trial, but for the salvation of man. It was a scheme of mercy, a scheme of love, a scheme of grace, a scheme of redemption, by a divine mediator between God and man. Not to be fulfilled now, but some four thousand years hence. Not in Eden, where the first Adam had sinned, but in that land of promise, where the second Adam

should be born and cradled in a manger. Not a mere man, but God and man; Emmanuel, God with us; Son of God, and son of Mary! It was he, who was now, long before his birth, "rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, and whose delights were with the sons of men."

This earth was to be the scene, and these sons of men were to be the subjects of that saving grace. Not to redeem angels, and not to redeem "that place prepared for the devil and his angels." No; but to redeem men, "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh"; to redeem the earth, the very earth which had been cursed for the sin of man. This was what he would come for, and obey for, and die for; and as such he was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."

In all these coming generations of men he foresaw those "whom God had given him." They were his in that covenant, which is "well ordered in all things, and sure," They belonged to him, as his own inheritance, and were the royal seed that were to compose his royal family and kingdom by and by.

A true pastor will not only love his people, but he will love their children. They are the children of the covenant, and heirs of the covenant promises. To these he looks, and for these he labors and prays; because they are to be the future "subjects of the kingdom." So it was, in a higher sense, that the pre-incarnate Christ took delight in Abraham, because he was to be "the father of the faithful"; and in his descendants, because these were to be heirs of the same covenant promises and blessings. And thus it was all down the history of the church. In all its history, and all its membership, he felt the deepest and most abiding interest.

To us it seems strange that he could have taken delight in such a man as Noah, who got drunk; or Jacob, the supplanter; or David, the adulterer and murderer; and even after he had come in the flesh, it seems strange that he could take delight in such a man as Peter, who he knew would deny him. Surely there was not much in the personal character of such men to make them desirable as companions and associates in daily life. No; but there was a wonderful possibility in the case of each one of them. Saved and sanctified by grace, they might become wonderful in-

struments, in his hand, for the accomplishment of his great purposes.

When Florence Nightingale devoted herself to the sick and wounded in the Crimea, she delighted in the work, but not because it was any special pleasure for her to associate with these wounded sufferers. When a teacher gathers around him a number of careless, restless, thoughtless scholars, and tries to teach them a Sunday-school lesson, there is not any special delight in the mere companionship of such boys. But there is a delight, an unspeakable delight, in trying to do them good; in trying to teach them some wholesome truth, that will sink into the heart and do them good in maturer years.

And so it was with him, "whose delights were with the sons of men." "He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." It was not to get good, but to do good; not to save himself, but to save others. It was love, pure, disinterested love, "a love which passeth knowledge," which brought him from heaven to earth; and the delight he had in these sons of men came from a knowledge of the fact that he was doing good, that he was "preparing many sons unto glory."

In this view of the case, we can easily see how "his delights were with the sons of men." It must have been a delight to him to teach Enoch how to "walk with God," until "he was not, for God took him." It must have been a delight, when he knew the deluge was coming to tell Noah to build an ark, and just how to build it, and then to stand on the deck himself and steer that quaint craft, with its precious freight, over a shoreless sea, and anchor it on the top of Ararat. It must have been a delight to talk with Abraham, "as a friend talketh with a friend," about the fire that was coming on the doomed cities of the plain; to take Lot by the hand and lead him out before the fire and brimstone rained down on the wicked place. It must have been a delight to him, to see that Joseph should grow up in a heathen court uncontaminated, until he became so honest and honored, that he was to save up food for his good old father and his cruel brothers. It must have been a delight to him, to see that "Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter," and from the burning bush,

to send him back to Egypt, to lead his people out from that state of bondage.

It must have been a delight to him to see the paschal lamb slain, and the blood sprinkled on the lintel and the door posts; the first great type of him, of whom it should be said, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." It must have been a great delight to him to project that pillar of cloud and fire to lead his people dry-shod across the Red Sea, to send them bread from heaven, and water out of the rock. It must have been a delight to him to talk with Moses on the Mount, to give him the written law, to tell him just how to build the tabernacle, and to enact for the people all those laws, civil and ecclesiastical, that were to set them apart from all the world, as a church, and as a commonwealth.

It must have been a delight to him to see that "holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," when writing the Bible. It must have been a delight to him to tell Moses how to write the Pentateuch; and to tell Joshua how to keep up the history, both in deeds and in an infallible record of those deeds. It must have been a delight to him to tell David how to write the Psalms; and to tell the prophets, in advance, things that were to come. In a word, it must have been a delight to him, to see that *every word in every book* of this Old Testament was *inspired*; and so become an infallible guide, both for the faith and the practice of his people.

When Dr. W. H. McGuffey was compiling his text-books for children, much of the work must have been very irksome to him. But when he thought of the thousands and millions of children who would learn to spell, and learn to read out of these little books, his own kind, pious heart must have thrilled with delight. And so, when our Lord knew, as he must have known, that through those inspired men, he was writing a book, the book, which was to be the text-book of religion for all the race of Adam, he must have been filled with inexpressible delight. And to carry the illustration further, Dr. McGuffey selected pictures to illustrate the words and truths taught in these primary lesson books. And just so, before him, our Lord had selected the tabernacle service, and the temple service, all the various rites and ordinances, as

types, a kind of visible, tangible illustrations, to make plain to his people those obscure, abstruse, spiritual truths, which must be understood before we can become "wise unto salvation." And so, we have here such as these: the manna, the water gushing from the smitten rock, the passage of the Jordan, Lot's wife, the ark, the scape-goat, the brazen serpent. All these, and many, many others, were pictures, illustrations in this text-book, which we, as children, can look at, and at a glance take in what he meant to teach us. And so, as an author, with all these human amanuenses writing a book for his own people in all the ages, "his delights were with the sons of men."

What then is the conclusion of the whole matter? "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not." (John i. 1-5.)

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth." (John i. 14.)

In these words we have a statement of the "great mystery of godliness." "The Word was made flesh." He, who was one Person of the Godhead, became a man, not an angel, but a man, and thus became the Saviour, not of angels, but of men. "For verily he took not on him *the nature* of angels, but he took on *him* the seed of Abraham." Oh, what wondrous love was this! To pass by "the devil and his angels," and come down to the low estate of man! And not only at his birth, but in the very creation, and all down the ages, he is represented as saying: "I was daily his (God's) delight, rejoicing always before him; rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights were with the sons of men."

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