

# THE FUNCTION OF PERSECUTION IN CHURCH EXTENSION,

by R. F. Campbell, D. D.

EXPOSITORY PREACHING, by Professor Thomas F. Day, D. D.

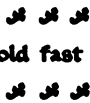
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Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.

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# The Bible Student.

CONTINUING

## The Bible Student and Religious Outlook.

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**Christianity  
And Revelation.** Christianity is the one revealed religion. That is to say, while the tenets of other religions are the product of human thought, the doctrines of Christianity are communications from God. Christianity thus stands fundamentally in contrast with all other religions. Nothing could be less true, therefore, than SAINTE-BEUVE's declaration that "Christianity is only the perfection of the total body of universal beliefs,—the central axis that fixes the sense of all deviations." If what the Christian Scriptures contain is nothing but "all that the sages have said," and what Jesus has done may be fairly summed up as only "confirming with his own impress, the common law of righteousness," then Christianity also is only a "natural religion," possibly the purest product of human thought on religious themes, but essentially nothing but a product of human thought. It is on the contrary, however, the one "supernatural religion."

**Religion and  
Revelation.**

It is very possible, to be sure, to overpress this contrast. Christianity does not stand in an exclusively antithetical relation to other

religions. There is a high and true sense in which it is also their fulfillment. All that enters into the essence of religion is present in them no less than in it, although in a less pure form. They too possess the idea of God, the consciousness of guilt, the longing for redemption: they too possess offerings, priesthood, temples, worship, prayer. Israel's Promise, Christianity's Possession, is also the Desire of all nations. Nor can we deny to them absolutely revelation itself. Though Christianity is the religion of revelation, it is not to be supposed that the human intellect has had no concern in its teachings: and though the ethnic religions are the religions of nature, it is not to be imagined that God has left any people wholly without revelation of himself. There are elements of human thought in the teachings of Christianity, and there are elements of revelation in all religions. Or, rather, revelation and religion are correlates, and there can be no religion save on the basis of revelation. Wherever religion exists at all; wherever there is discoverable any knowledge of God—however dim or degraded—there revelation must be inferred. For it is only as God makes himself known

that he can be known, in any measure whatever.

**Two Senses of Revelation.** It is very evident, thus, that the term "revelation" bears more than one sense. In one of its senses it must be said to underlie all religions, as the essential condition of all knowledge of God. In another of them it is the characteristic of Christianity alone, "the only revealed religion." The word means, actively, the act of God by which he communicates to his creatures knowledge of himself; and, passively, the knowledge resultant upon such acts of God. It is currently employed in a wider and in a narrower sense. These are commonly distinguished as "general" and "special" revelation, or as "natural" and "supernatural" revelation; though, perhaps, the terms "cosmical" and "soteriological" would better express the real distinction. In its wider sense, it includes all the acts of God by means of which he makes himself known to his creatures as such; or, passively, all knowledge of God, however attained, inasmuch as all knowledge of God is the result of acts of self-expression on God's own part. In its narrower sense it is confined to those special acts of God by means of which, intervening in the natural order of things, he makes himself known as the revealer and regenerator of a lost world; or passively the whole body of the knowledge of God derived from the series of his redemptive acts. It is in this, its narrower sense, that Christianity, inclusive of its preliminary stage of Judaism, is said to be the only revealed religion. It is in its wider sense, that all religions are said to be based on revelation.

**Two Kinds of Religion.** We may conveniently divide all the religions which have

existed among men into two broad classes: (1) the primitive religion, before sin had broken men's continuous access to and communion with God; and (2) the religions of sinful men. The religions of sinful men again part into two broad classes: (a) those which are the products of man's own efforts to renew his communion with God,—the "natural religions;" and (b) that which is the product of God's gracious activities looking to the renewal of communion with man,—the one "supernatural religion." The real difference between Christianity and other religions turns thus precisely on their diverse initiation: in the ethnic religions men are seeking after God if haply they may feel after him and find him; in Christianity God is seeking men and finding them. "Special revelation" is, of course, limited to this latter religion, while "general revelation" alone—the revelation that God has made to his creatures as such—can find a place in what we, therefore, call the "natural religions." It is not to be supposed, of course, that God is not active in both spheres of religious development, and active in both for his one great end of building up the Kingdom of God. But he is active in different manners in the two spheres. Mr. HENRI BOIS strikingly says: "There are differences of degree in the action of God,—and differences of degree may not be small differences,—and there are differences in kind and differences in end. God, let us say, has prepared the whole of humanity to receive Christianity. To *receive* it, yes. But it was especially and uniquely the Hebrews that he prepared to give birth to it." Here the essential contrast at least is suggested. The natural religions embody only fragments of that general revelation which is the condition of all religion; Christianity alone is the product of that

special work of God which we call special revelation. Were there no "general revelation" there would be no religion in the world of any kind; were there no "special revelation" there would be no Christianity.

**General  
Revelation.**

There is little occasion nowadays to defend the reality or investigate the methods of "general revelation." Its reality is disputed by no one but the anti-theist and the agnostic, the one of whom denies the existence of a God to make himself known, and the other doubts the capacity of the human mind to read the vestiges which God, if there be a God, has left in his handiwork. Revelation is to-day practically universally acknowledged to be an implication of theism and a necessary postulate of religion. Even a human spirit can be known only as it expresses itself: much less can the Divine Spirit be known against or apart from his will. God does nothing unconsciously or inadvertently: he does all he does purposely and purposefully. Revelation is, therefore, never an unconscious emanation or an involuntary reflection of God in his works: it is always a conscious, free, intentional making of himself known, a purposed self-expression. That God may be known at all from his works, is due, therefore, to his designed expression of himself in his works, with the end of giving knowledge of himself and so of awaking and nourishing religion in his creatures. The scope of this revelation is coextensive with the works of God: it began with creation and it will cease only when God ceases to act. Its proximate end is by making himself known to his creatures to bring them into relation with himself: its ultimate design to fill the intelligent universe with the blissful vision of God.

**Special  
Revelation.**

With respect to special revelation the case is very different. Here, too, doubtless the controversy is ultimately with anti-theistic presuppositions, whether deistic or pantheistic. But it is proximately with numerous types of thought which seek to mediate between deistic and pantheistic conceptions and those of a truly Christian theism; and in meeting the subtlety and variety of these Christian apologetics finds to-day its chief task. In the eighteenth century the debate was chiefly with Deism and the compromising schemes which grew up in the course of the conflict with Deism. In the nineteenth century it was rather with Pantheism and the compromising schemes which have sought to find a middle ground between Pantheism and Christian Theism. Thus it has come to be no longer necessary to prove that God may and does speak in men: it is admitted on all hands that he reveals himself unceasingly through all the activities of creaturely minds. Instead of denying the intrusion of the supernatural into the affairs of men, men are now more prone to deny the formally natural. All thought is conceived as the immanent work of God. The task has accordingly come to be to distinguish a revelation separable from this universal revelatory action and capable of recognition as "special;" and to vindicate for it a supernaturalism of a more immediate order and of a more direct kind than is freely attributed to all the thought of man concerning divine things. When the natural is defined as itself supernatural, there is no place left for a distinguishable supernatural. This insidious undermining of the idea of supernatural revelation by means of definition, can be successfully met only by still more precise definition. All knowledge of God is recognized

to be supernatural in source: it is only as God frames knowledge of himself in the human mind that man comes to know God at all. Emphasis must, therefore, be laid, in defining distinctively supernatural revelation, not merely on the supernatural origin of the knowledge so communicated, but also on the supernatural mode of its communication. As it is technically phrased, distinctively supernatural revelation differs from natural revelation, not because its origin is *supra hanc naturam*, but because it takes place not *per* but *praeter hanc naturam*.

**Organic Unity  
Of General  
And Special  
Revelation.**

It is of the utmost importance, however, that we should not misconceive the relation between "general" and "special" revelation. This relation is not one of contrast and opposition, but rather one of supplement and completion. They do not stand as two systems, each complete in itself, over against one another; but together they form one organic whole. The purpose of special revelation is not to correct, much less to set aside general revelation. General revelation needs no correction—God has not revealed himself falsely or misleadingly in it. And it cannot be set aside,—what it reveals of God is eternal and necessary truth. It might even be fairly pronounced inexact to speak of the purpose of special revelation as to supplement and complete general revelation, if the matter be conceived too abstractly. In itself, general revelation is neither imperfect nor incomplete—God does all things well. The occasion of special revelation is extraneous to the organism of revelation itself, and lies in the necessity of meeting altered circumstances. Sin had entered in; and, speaking after the manner of man, the new condi-

tions induced by sin required a new method and a new content for revelation. The modes of revelation adapted to sinless man would not suffice to make sinful man know God; the substance of truth revealed to sinless man would not suffice for the needs of sinful man. That sinful man might know and that he might know what sinful man needs to know, therefore, what we call special revelation entered in, not to abrogate general revelation as no longer useful, but to adapt the great organic process of revelation to the changed conditions and thus to conduct it surely onward to its originally contemplated end. It is not to meet any failure in general revelation that special revelation is introduced, but to meet failure in man to whom the revelation is addressed. It is not the power of nature that it seeks to break, but the power of sin: nature it is its end rather to restore and to fulfil. The great organism of revelation thus includes all that God has done, looking towards the communication of knowledge of himself: and this includes the totality of his operations, in nature and history and grace. That portion of this organic process which is included in "grace" we call special revelation, which, therefore, has the same occasion and the same end as the dispensation of grace itself, of which it is a constituent element, or rather a specific aspect.

**Effect of Sin on  
Revelation.** If we inquire more closely into the nature of the alteration in the great organic process of revelation occasioned by sin, we shall perceive that at least three things require emphasis. Sin had brought mankind under the condemnation of God: a special revelation of God to sinners must needs lay its stress therefore, on a new aspect of God's character: God the redeemer of sin-

ners must become its central disclosure. Sin had destroyed man's natural communion with God: a special revelation of God to sinners must needs, therefore, institute a new channel of communion between man and God: its method must necessarily become mediatorial. Sin had dulled man's consciousness and blended his perception of divine things: a special revelation of God to sinners, therefore, must needs include an immanent movement of God's Spirit on man's heart, restoring his capacity for the reception of divine knowledge. All this, it is obvious, is supernatural to the core. Sin, in one word, had destroyed man's natural relation to God as his creature: all that remained natural hereafter was a dispensation of punitive infliction. If any other relation was to be induced: if God's purpose to be known, in the deep sense of that word, which involves thorough communion, was to be fulfilled: nothing remained possible but a supernatural dispensation of grace. And this supernatural dispensation of grace becomes accordingly his special revelation, his peculiar making of himself known, his particular self-expression, to sinners.

**Varying Senses  
Of the Term  
Revelation.**

According to the Scriptures, therefore, special revelation is a historic process, an organic system, a continuous divine activity directed to destroying the power of sin, to the building up of the Kingdom of God, to the restoration of the Cosmos, to the summing up of all things in Christ. In this historic process, God makes himself known as the God of Grace: and every element that enters into it is a substantial constituent of this special revelation. Properly taken, therefore, special revelation is the redemptive process itself conceived

as a manifestation of God's nature and character. Sometimes, however, the word is more narrowly employed to express the particular elements in the redemptive process which have for their proximate end the making known to men of God's character, purposes or will. When so used, it is customary to say that in the course of his redemptive work, God makes himself known in three modes—theophany, prophecy, miracle—or more broadly phrased, in appearing, speaking, doing—in his person, speech, deeds. More narrowly still, the term is sometimes confined to that particular mode of making himself known in which God approaches man through the medium of speech as distinguished from his apparition in theophany and his manifestation in acts of power. These are legitimate uses of the term, and the variety of its application need not confuse us, if we will only keep in mind the correlation of "revelation" in every sense of the word with the great end of the establishing and perfecting of the Kingdom of God. Its purpose in no case and in none of its applications can be summed up as merely to inform men's understandings (which would be intellectualism); or merely to correct their conduct (which would be ethicism); or merely to quicken within them religious emotions (which would be mysticism). It is always to be understood as taking its place in the great organic process by which God is rescuing mankind, the world, from the power of sin and making his name glorious. And as such it takes its place also, of course, with the totality of this process in the still broader process of revelation in general, into which it works to cure the faults of man induced by sin, and so to carry the revelatory process forward to its originally destined end of making known to the intelligent universe all

the glory of the Divine nature.

B. B. W.

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**The Literal  
Acceptance of  
The Old Testa-  
ment Indicted.**

Much of a recent lecture, delivered before a great university, was devoted to exposing the sad consequence which comes to the souls of men from "a literal acceptance of the Old Testament," or, in other words used by the distinguished lecturer, from "the dogma of a verbal inspiration, the dogma of the equal divinity of all parts of Scripture, the refusal to see any development either from the ethnic religions to the religion of Israel, or any development within the religion of Israel itself." It drives men from religion. "During the last year I have come across so many instances of it—each the story of a human soul—that it has become vivid and burning in my mind . . . One and all tell how the literal acceptance of the Bible—the faith which finds in it nothing erroneous, nothing defective, and (outside of the sacrifices and Temple) nothing temporary—is what has driven them from religion." The object of the gifted Scotch professor in describing the disaster to men's religious life was to open a door in the hearts of his audience for the hospitable reception of certain modern theories which postulate the prevalence and pervasiveness of error in the Scriptures; but it should be remembered that the rejection of the verbal inspiration and historical trustworthiness of the Scriptures does not involve the acceptance of any particular theory regarding composition, date and authorship of the books of the Bible. Such rejection is a step that must be taken by those who follow the lecturer and the school of criticism which he represents; but the doctrine of the inspiration and minute accu-

racy of the Scriptures may be repudiated, and the supposed relief of that repudiation to mind and conscience may be enjoyed without logical obligation to accept the principles, methods and conclusions of either the school of EWALD or the school of GRAF-WELLHAUSEN.

**First Count in  
The Indictment.**

"The faith which finds in the Bible nothing erroneous." This first count in the indictment is somewhat too sweeping, if it is intended to describe the teaching of the old orthodoxy. It has been fully known and taught, of course, that many minor errors have crept into the text during the process of its transmission, due to the inherent frailties and limitations of scribes. It has also been held to be certain that entire passages have been interpolated, as in the New Testament the concluding verses of Mark's gospel and eleven verses at the beginning of the eighth chapter of John; which record occurrences not elsewhere reported, and may sometimes introduce unhistorical matter and even incidents irreconcilable with the original narrative of Scripture. Textual criticism will eventually, it is hoped, succeed in eliminating these confusing additions. Meaning the emended text, it is correct to say that the catholic faith of the church finds "nothing erroneous" in the Old Testament. If specks should really come to light, the church will be ready and able to recognize them without casting aside its doctrinal system. This fact is evidenced from statements made decades ago by representative teachers of the old orthodoxy. Scientists and historians have at times taken exception to biblical statements. Sometimes they have withdrawn their objections; but at most they have never found the errors so numerous and pervasive and irrecon-

cilable as does the school of critics to which the distinguished lecturer belongs.

**The Second Count.** "The faith which finds in the Bible nothing defective."

This second count is quite inaccurately drawn, unless it is based on a quibble about words. The old orthodoxy does not hold such a faith. It could not look upon the morals of the Mosaic age as perfect when it had the words of Christ himself: "Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you." A part of the faith of the church has also been that in the Old Testament period religious truths had not in all cases reached their full development nor their highest expression nor their relative proportions; that the scope and spirituality of the laws—that they reach beyond the letter, that they are concerned with the thoughts and intents of the heart, that a higher spirit exists than the disposition to exact legal justice—were not always discerned nor welcomed. These imperfections or deficiencies in the laws and doctrines of Israel, and the defective observance of them by men, were brought out by Christ in the sermon on the mount and in his discussions with the Pharisees and the Sadducees; they have long been recognized by Christian thinkers who have believed in "the verbal inspiration" and "the equal divinity of all parts of Scripture;" and they have been acknowledged and accorded adequate treatment in the best teach-

ing of the church. These distinctions form one of the tests—we say "one" advisedly—form one of the tests by which the doctrines and deeds of the Old Testament worthies must be tried by the teacher and preacher who would draw true biblical instruction from the lives of the ancient heroes of the faith.

**The Third Count.**

Less important than the other two is the third count: "Outside of the sacrifices and the Temple, nothing temporary." This count is untrue. Not even in the home-land of the gifted Scottish lecturer has such opinion been the creed of the church. The standard teaching, for several centuries at least, has been that "God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws . . . partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, . . . and partly holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated under the New Testament. To them also, as a body politic, he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any other, now, further than the general equity thereof may require."

Probably it is not higher criticism, but elementary instruction in the faith, that these poor, benighted wanderers need who are said to be straying from religion and groping about in darkness because of "the literal acceptance of the Old Testament" by the church. J. D. D.