

THE LORD HATH SPOKEN

By B. H. ROBERTS

- - - - -

NUMBER TWO

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.
(Isaiah 1:2.)

The Question Which Most Concerns Men

What message would God have delivered had he spoken within the last one hundred years, or should he speak now? I submit the question to thoughtful men. What would God reveal as the first great thing necessary for the enlightenment of the world? What concerns the world most to know? It would be nothing that pertains to what men recognize as material things, and benefits. It would be nothing that concerns their worldly fortunes. After all, when men strike bedrock in their earnest thinking, it is the things of the spirit that count most with them. Truths which inspire to noble action and create desire for the great things of life, are the things which matter. And the things which pass away with the using, or that are left behind when life is ended, are, by comparison, of small importance. Down in the depths of your soul, O Reader, what would you have God make known to you now-today-should he speak? What truth would most affect your life, and the life of the whole world, for all time to come?

Would it not be to know for certain

The Truth About God?

The truth about his being, and the kind of being he is?

Undoubtedly. Remove the veil which shrouds God in mystery, strip off the "unknown" about God, and the greatest possible service is at once rendered to mankind. That truth revealed would throw into true relationship every other truth, and make possible an orderly world. It would be the knowledge that would do more to harmonize humanity, than any other truth that could be revealed, could it really be known and officially proclaimed. It is the knowledge precedent to all other true knowledge. After knowing the truth about God, men would then be able to articulate all the facts of human life, and of human experience.

Is God Now Known?

It may be said that this knowledge is now known, that God already has been revealed, and that the world knows God, both the being and the kind of being he is. But does it? The "Christian" will be most ready to answer in the affirmative; but is there any really clear conception of God among Christians, a really harmonized, vital faith? Make the inquiry and see.

The jargon of the accepted Christian creeds respecting the being and kind of being God is makes it impossible for one to believe that there exists any clear-cut, intelligible, working conception of God even among Christians, notwithstanding their assumed assurance respecting the matter.

Then it should be remembered that the Christians form but part, less than one-third of the world's population, all divisions and subdivisions of it included; and many of these are but nominally Christian. And this after two thousand years of Christian propaganda, at times attended with military conquest in its interest; yet Christianity has been able to proceed no farther than this with the evangelization of the world to its creeds.

Evidently the world still has need of enlightenment on the subject of God.

World Hunger for the Knowledge of the Christ

Next to a revelation concerning God, and as part of the subject of the being and nature of God, the world would be interested in a revelation about Jesus Christ, and what relationship he sustains to God, and to men. So great is the interest of humanity in the Christ that a modern writer, author of a thoughtful book, with the title, "Life of the Master," ventured to say:

Were a parchment discovered in a mound, six inches square, containing fifty words which were certainly spoken by Jesus, this utterance would count for more than all the books which have been published since the first century.

If a veritable picture of the Lord could be unearthed from a catacomb so the world could see with its own eyes what like He was, it would not matter that its colors were faded, and that it was roughly drawn, that picture would have at once a solitary place amid the treasures of art. (Rev. John Watson-Ian Maclaren—"Life of the Master," Prologue.)

The Christ and the Creeds

In some way, for Christians, Christ is supposed to be Deity, and a **revelation** of Deity. Hence comes in large measure this human interest in him noted by Reverend Watson. Utter confusion appears to obtain, however, in understanding how and in what way Jesus is God. For instance, in the Articles of Faith in one great and influential division of Christendom, it is written respecting God:

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness; the Maker of all things both visible and invisible.

Surely Jesus Christ cannot be this immaterial, passionless thing, for in his resurrected, and therefore in his immortal state, when he proclaimed himself to be possessed of all power in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:16-19), it was manifest that he was a definite personage of a spirit and of a body of flesh and bones united-indissolubly united—in one person, a perfect and glorified soul; and as such

having form, dimensions, occupying space, possessing the beautiful passion of love for men, for justice, for mercy; and hating injustice, sin and iniquity. Jesus cannot be God manifested in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16) and at the same time be the bodiless and passionless being of the Articles of Faith referred to above.

Moreover, it is said in a subsequent Article of the same **creed** that:

The Son, which is the Word of the Father; . . . took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance: so that two whole and perfect Natures, that is to say, Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, *never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God, and very man.*" (Articles of Religion, The Book of Common Prayer, Protestant Episcopal Church in the U.S.A.)

And still later it is **writtren** in these Articles of Faith:

Christ did truly rise again from death! and took again his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature; wherewith he ascended into heaven and *there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.* (Article IV:)

But if Christ is in very deed—as here **described**—"Godhead and manhood" joined together in one person—"never to be divided," whereof is one Christ, *Very God*: and Christ is risen, taking again "his body, with flesh, bones, and all things appertaining to the perfection of man's **nature**"—if all this be true, then how in the name of heaven can God be a being without body (meaning not material, but "incorporeal"), without parts, and without passions?

Creedal Conceptions of God Confusing

Further exposition by the proponents of the "Christian" creeds does not clarify the mystery of the conceptions of God as set forth in the creeds under consideration, nor rid them of their inconsistency.

For instance, the Christian Creed bearing the name of St. Athanasius, striving to express **the** relationship of the

three personages in the Christian Godhead--and confessedly accounting the Godhead "incomprehensible"--says:

The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate, and the Holy Ghost uncreate. The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible, and the Holy Ghost **incomprehensible**. The Father eternal, the Son eternal, and the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal. As also there are not three **incomprehensibles**, nor three uncreate, but one uncreate and one incomprehensible. So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Ghost almighty; and yet there are not three almighties, but one almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God.

No wonder the author of the "Decline and Fall of Rome" said in his comment on this creed:

As often as we deduce any positive conclusions from a negative idea, we are involved in darkness, perplexity, and inevitable contradiction. (D. and F., ch. xxi.)

The above described conditions lead to mental distraction, to the confounding of knowledge, to the subversion of faith, and to the rejection of the Christ as the revelation of God-the manifested Deity in the flesh, and drive men to such confessions of faith as this:

The Modern Conception of God

The Creator is for modern men a sleepless, active energy and will, **which yesterday**, today and forever actuates all things, **as the human spirit** actuates its own body, so small and yet-so **inconceivably complex**. . . . Twentieth Century people recognize God chiefly in the wonderful energies of sound, light, and electricity; in the vital processes of plants, and animals, in human lives and aspirations, and in the evolution of human society. ("The Trial of Jesus," Srinivasa Aiyar.)

One may well ask, what has become of Jesus Christ as God manifested in the flesh in all this? Are we not back at the feet of the unknown God of the antique world? God a mere force, with Jesus Christ, as the revelation of God, driven not only from the foreground of the picture, but crowded from the picture altogether.

Still at the Shrine of The Unknown God

Concerning this acceptance and worship of "the Unknown God," a leading daily newspaper in the United States a few years ago said editorially:

It is a painful and a confusing thing to the Christian investigator to be convinced, as he must be, by the fact that millions of conventionally good people in our land, as in all civilized countries, are kneeling "To the unknown God."

One cannot say how many professed Christians really have a conscious knowledge of the God whom they reverence and whose Son they believe Jesus, the Christ, to be. But one may know without much inquiry that very few of our Christian churchmen have what we may be allowed to call "a working knowledge of God." In other words, they have no definite mental or spiritual conception of the Personality of God. They attribute to Him in a somewhat nebulous way certain characteristics in perfection, such as eternity, holiness, truth, love, mercy, patience, wisdom and power. But why and how these things constitute Personality and obtain manifestation in human affairs, is a riddle more profound than a Delphian oracle or a shadow interrogation point on the face of the Sphinx.

They have simply apprehended that "there must be a God," somewhat as the French cynic said if none had ever been revealed man would have invented one from necessity. They have been trained from infancy to think of an awful God, and finally, by the religious impulse that always comes to a man strongly at some point in his sentient career, they have professed a binding faith in that God-but still he remains practically and consciously "The Unknown God."

It is one of the most strenuous tasks of modern preaching to secure the serious, studious attention of men and women to the plain correspondence between the scriptural revelations of God the Father, with the known attributes and actions of Christ the Son.

Preachers themselves preach "The Unknown God" because they have not **acquired** the sniritual discernment to be satisfied that if Christ was "the express-image of the Father," then, logically **and** indisputably, "God was in Christ revealing Himself to the world." All through the labors of the apostles in the first age of the church runs the ceaseless insistence that men should not differentiate between the characters of God and Christ, but believe in Christ as an ABSOLUTE manifestation of God in the flesh. If modern preachers would **dwell upon** that mighty truth with the same persistence, the earth would soon be aflame with the knowledge and the love

of God, and Christ would become the true Lord of millions who now do Him only lip service, and of millions more who would suddenly see in Him the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

It is scarcely to be wondered over that gold, society, pleasure, pride and gilded sin in myriad forms can so easily persuade and pervert so many in the modern Christian world, when we realize that they live in so great a fog of ignorance concerning the God whom they **perfunctorily** profess to believe in and acknowledge they ought to obey in **all** truth, righteousness, and holy **con**versation. . . . We need in America the old-time faith in a personal and known God, Who is our Father in heaven, Who has given us His Son for a Savior. A revival of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus will level forever, in and out of the churches, countless thousands of altars "To the unknown God."

Another Mars' Hill Sermon Needed

"Ye men of Athens," began Paul on Mars' Hill—

I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, **TO THE UNKNOWN GOD**. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, *him declare I unto you.*

'God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;

Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;

And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

That they should seek the Lord, if **haply** they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:

For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. . . .

He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, *in that he hath raised him from the dead.* (Acts 17:22-31.)

Coming to this matter of the resurrection the Athenians would hear him no further at that time.

Three things are to be noted with reference to Paul's dis-

course. (1) He would displace the "Unknown God" of the Athenians, whom they worshipped, with Jesus Christ raised from the dead, therefore an immortal personage of flesh and bone and spirit, eternally united. (2) Yet not afar off, "not far from every one of us"; so everywhere present that "in him we live and move and have our being." (3) And also in some way men are "the offspring" of God.

Elsewhere Paul has said that Jesus was God "manifested in the flesh." (I Tim. 3:16.) That he was the express image of the Father's person, and the brightness of the Father's glory. (Heb. 1:1-3.) It must follow also that the Father is the express image of the Son's person; also the brightness of the Son's glory-each reflects the other; they are alike. In each is the fulness of the God-head bodily. (Col. 1:10 and 2:9.)

So now, in this age as in Paul's day, it is time that some prophet should come with a word from God to reinstate the risen Christ in the conceptions of men as God manifested in the flesh. God revealed as person, and also revealed as "not far removed from every one of us"; but so near and so everywhere present that we may feel that in him we live and move and have our being; and also that men are the offspring of God-his sons.

Again, I say the world needs a revelation concerning God, and concerning Christ as God. Be it so:

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken.

But when? How? And to Whom? And what hath He said?

- - - - -

Number Three will deal with the beginning of that series of revelations through which God hath spoken in these last days.