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Special Revelation as Objective

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"Objective" is a term applied to outward things, in contrast to "subjective," used to denote those things that belong to the conscious life. Thus whatever is considered as independent of the perceiving and reasoning self is "objective," whereas all that belongs to the conscious life is termed "subjective." We speak of a thing as having "objective reality," that is, it is an object of perception and thought, a "thing" external to the mind, that goes on existing even when we are not thinking about it. The term "subjective" designates the contents of consciousness itself; the term "objective," the raw material or subject matter of the consciousness (the word "matter," of course, here not being restricted to its literal meaning).

I. VERBALIZATION OF REVELATION

The objective aspect of revelation is that embodied in the verbal expression of the message. A great deal of thought has been given by philologists and linguists to the nature of the relationship of the word to its prototype and many attempts have been made to devise a satisfactory terminology. Susan Stebbing suggested the word "referend" for what is signified, and "symbol" for the signifying sign (*A Modern Introduction to Logic*, 1933). French linguists have simplified matters by using *le significant* for the former, and *le significant* for the latter. A. H. Gardiner speaks of the two-sidedness of words, "sound on the one face, and thought on the other" (*Speech and Language*, 1932). He stresses the distinction between meaning and the "thing-meant"; the word "spade" (word as vehicle of meaning)

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is not a "spade" (the garden implement itself). He would define speech as "the use, between man and man, of articulate sound-signs for the communication of their wishes and their views about things." The definition given by E. Sapir differed little from this: "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (*Language*, 1921). E. H. Sturtevant defines language "as a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which members of a social group cooperate and interact" (*An Introduction to Linguistic Science*, 1956).

I am aware that many American linguists in their linguistic analyses eliminate mentalistic terms as far as possible. Thus L. Bloomfield would describe speech merely in terms of stimulus and response, deliberately avoiding all reference to mind or thought (*Language*, 1933). That this approach has proved singularly attractive can be well understood, for, though it is contrary to the facts of experience, it provides what seems to be a scientific reason for avoiding the really complex aspect of language. In this essay I propose to adhere to the traditional terminology, since I am dealing with what might be called "metalinguistics," and since I am fully persuaded that the anti-mentalistic approach is too circumscribed. The fact that a child quickly acquires the facility of using the sound symbol he has learned to associate

with a material object even in the absence of that object would justify one in affirming that at least a partial function of languages is to provide a system of sound symbols for the inventory of the mind. It will be objected that the ability to use the symbol in the absence of an external stimulus is not sufficient ground for assuming the existence of a mental concept as the object's counterpart in the mind. It is not, however, the nature of this counterpart that is significant, but the *action* of finding and producing the appropriate symbol at will. In speech two operations take place, that of selection and that of rejection, both equally important, and to measure the first and dismiss the second looks very like saying that it is not the water in the well that counts but only what comes from the pump. In mentioning the process of rejection, it looks as if we are saying in effect that here something is the cause of nothing, but that would imply equating inactivity with nothing. This is very different from acting and speaking as if nothing could be the efficient cause of anything, as is the case when some linguists insist on treating speech as if it were nothing more than a tape-recording. The fact that, in speech, recording and playing-back often seem to take place simultaneously is not a valid reason for either denying or ignoring the dichotomy, and entering into a conspiracy of silence with regard to mentalistic expressions. No scientist would be content to confine himself to the correlation of a series of phenomena and not try to ascertain the circumstances under which they occur. The mentality of a deceased person is beyond scientific investigation, but the products of his mind may persist, and these could be used as evidence of his previous existence. Linguistic research that holds that only

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the playing-back is its concern may find the "ghost in the machine" becoming recalcitrant.

The verbalization of revelation, as we now possess it, is in written form. Writing was devised for the purpose of giving ephemeral speech a permanent form, and it might aptly be called "substitute" speech. That this was clearly recognized as the function of writing is seen in such expressions Is the scripture (i.e., the writing) says" (cf. Rom. 4:3; 9:17; 10:11; 11:2; James 2:23). That written words have the same validity as the actual words of the speaker is shown by the fact that they are admissible as evidence in a court of law, carrying the same weight as those of a living and present witness, while the legislation concerning inheritance depends almost exclusively on the tacit admission that written testimony is in no way inferior to the spoken word. In fact, nuncupative or oral wills are only admissible in very special circumstances, for instance, the death of the testator in battle. The preference for a documentary will is a matter of plain common sense; one ground among others for this preference is the fact that a written document excludes the necessity of an intermediary, whose *bona fides* in turn would have to be scrutinized. A view of revelation as a kind of nuncupative will is hardly worthy of the concept of an omniscient God.

II. NATURE OF LANGUAGE

The linguistic aspect of the message as its embodiment raises at once the question of the nature of language. Since the days of F. de Saussure it has been customary to distinguish between language (*langue*) and speech (*parole*) (*Cours de linguistique generale*, 1916). Language is considered as that linguistic deposit at the disposal of a community using the same linguistic medium, whereas speech is the use made of this deposit by an individual at any given moment. Thus language is something passive, whereas speech is active. The

description of language as a "system of sound symbols for the inventory of the mind" differs from those definitions which start at an earlier stage before the inventory of a given environment had been reduced to mental concepts, and describes language as a code of symbols for things, objective and subjective. Speech, on the other hand, is the act by which the speaker provides with perceptible garments the invisible offspring of his mind. These perceptible garments, in themselves as transitory as the breath that produces them, may be given an ageless counterpart by the process of writing. Speech reduced to writing takes on an independent existence, unaffected by time and distance. The veracity of a letter, for instance, that takes several weeks to come from Hong Kong is as unaffected by the time factor as if it had come only from a neighboring state, and thus the reduction of a message to writing can eliminate in certain respects the effect of the time factor altogether.

In the present context the chief interest of language lies in its mode of

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action and its function. Language makes the communication of thought possible by providing verbal deputies for the ingredients of many situations. Not only has it evolved deputies for visible objects, but also for mental states, and for time sequence and time phases. By language it is possible also for a speaker to superimpose his will on another, and thus it provides the means by which the indispensable team-work of human society is coordinated. Language makes possible even the communication of inaccessible matter. We might consider as an instance of this, a request by a scientist to a non-scientist to pass on certain technical information to a fellow scientist. The full meaning of the message would probably be intelligibly inaccessible to the intermediary, but he could, nevertheless, accomplish the task with exactitude. Hence, the method by which inaccessible matter may be communicated is by the communication of a communication. It would seem, too, that the linguistic medium is essential to all satisfactory communication; even the mind in communication with itself is, apparently, never completely happy until it has reduced its problems to linguistic terms. The preciseness, accuracy, and range of language in communication point to it unmistakably as the first choice of an intelligent being as a medium for revelation.

Before we proceed to discuss the most significant aspect of language, it would be well perhaps to say a brief word about revelation through nature. That God is revealed to us in nature is freely admitted in the Bible, and the accepted primacy of the written revelation has never led Christians to disparage nature as an expression of the glory of God; while laying the supreme emphasis on the verbal revelation, they acknowledge also the glorious wonders of God in nature. But nature can speak only of power and intelligence and not of character, just as three lines of a letter from, say, Rembrandt might tell us more about his character than the most minute study of his greatest masterpiece. Thus we note the inadequacy of a revelation through nature compared with one in language.

III. LANGUAGE AND PERSONAL ENCOUNTER

Above all, inanimate objects cannot effect the personal encounter, which, as we shall see later, the genius of language alone can accomplish. Compared with the linguistic medium all other forms of communication, such as wordless symbols and rites, or the design of a temple,

belong intellectually to the most primitive stage of communication, the pictographic. By such means minds may be juxtaposed but there never can be intelligent communication.

In communication, an act of the highest significance takes place: an encounter between two psychical entities. Our five senses tell us of the physical world and its phenomena, but while in four of them the ratio which the response bears to the stimulus is a modest one, in the fifth, the sense of hearing, it may assume astronomical proportions. Given the right occasion, the unpretentious word "peace" may put a whole nation in a state of ecstasy.

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By means of the sense of hearing, as the receiver of linguistic communication, one mind can make contact with the mental world of another and can influence that inaccessible and mysterious realm. With the voluntary cooperation of the recipient, one may learn in turn something about the contents of that other mind. Without such voluntary cooperation it remains true: "For what person knows a man's thought except the spirit of the man which is in him?" (I Cor. 2:11). We now speak of the boundary that separates the "I" from the "thou" as a dimensional boundary (Karl Heim, *Glauben and Denken*, 1934). It is not in any sense of the word a spatial boundary; the terms "near" and "remote" when used in reference to it have no spatial significance. The mind of the man next to you in the railway carriage may be quite inaccessible to you, while at that very moment a friend a thousand miles away may be allowing you by means of a letter to learn something of what is beyond this boundary. The act of crossing this boundary is one of the most remarkable phenomena of our experience; it is only our familiarity with it that prevents us from appreciating the marvel of it. That messages actually cross this mysterious boundary can be seen every time anyone by a form of words produces a desired behavior pattern in his fellow. To describe things beyond the sphere of our sense, language is compelled to resort to analogical transference, as happens when we borrow most terminology for time from that of space, for example, the length of time, and shortness of time, and so forth.[1]

We have to do something similar to find linguistic terms to describe matters relating to a dimensional boundary, a term that may also be used with the necessary qualifications to describe the very different boundary between God and man. When, for instance, in this connection we speak of "above," a moment's reflection will tell us that "above" is not here used in a literal, spatial sense. We would still continue to use the word "above" even if we were in Australia. What interests us now, however, is not the nature of this boundary but the possibility of crossing it. If God willed to cross this boundary, he could surely do so by the existing means so extensively used between man and man.

Is not this what is implied by the rhetorical questions in Psalm 94:8 f.? "Understand, O stupid among the people, and you fools, when will you get sense? He who plants the ear, will he not

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[1] Since the theory of analogical transference, now widely held, assumes the primacy of sensory objects, it is repudiated as inimical to the Christian faith by Biblical theists who insist that language is God's gift for the purpose (among other purposes) of communing with him. Professor Martin here speaks only of terminology for time by way of example; there is no intimation of a general borrowing of spatial terms, or of the spatial-sensory origin of language. While Adam may have invented names for the animals, the power of using names and words is a divine gift, and its purpose, in part, was to enable man to speak with God.—ED.

hear? He who forms the eye, will he not look?" This is evidently intended to be only a token list, which no intelligent reader would hold to be exhaustive. The Psalmist may well have

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felt that, as references to God speaking were so numerous, it would have been stressing the obvious to have added "He who makes the tongue, will he not speak?"

There is no more common phrase in the Old Testament than "and God said." The related phrase "the word of God" occurs also with great frequency. The Bible leaves us in no doubt whatever that the vehicle of revelation is language. In view of the versatility of the linguistic medium and the unique role played by it in the reception and transmission of knowledge, it is the only means that possesses the requisite potentiality.

Mystical communication, in which the intellect is in abeyance and the object of the participant is to merge himself by a non-linguistic process in the Godhead, is excluded by a word often on the lips of the writers and prophets, the verb commonly translated by "to hear." The field of meaning of the Hebrew word is more extensive than the modern sense. The Hebrew signifies not only "to hear," but "to understand" and even "to respond" to what is said. For instance, in Genesis 11:7, we must translate "that a man may not understand the tongue of his neighbor," where the Hebrew verb is "to hear." Or again, in II Kings 18:26 "And Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna and Joab said to Rabshakey, 'Speak Aramaic, please, to your servants for we understand it [literally, hear] and don't speak with us Judaic [*scil*. Hebrew] in the ears of the people that are on the wall.'" The people on the wall would still hear them in our sense of the word when they spoke Aramaic, but not in the Hebrew sense.

From Genesis to Malachi this word is used in conjunction with divine communications. Thus for the Old Testament writers and prophets the process of communication was supraliminal, although on occasion the deeper import of the matter was beyond their full comprehension. In language the end always justifies the means, and the end is invariably effective communication. Here a coin from any mint may be legal tender and the value assigned to it is quite arbitrary and depends on the legality of usage and not on logic. It often avails itself of material that is beyond the world of normal experience, as, for instance, when we say "It is like living in a palace." Ignorance of the experience does not invalidate the phrase as a coin of communication. Again, a phrase may be factually inaccurate but still the current and legitimate equivalent of a certain situation. A phrase such as "the sun rises" is the normal means of describing that natural phenomenon brought about by the revolution of the earth; and not by the motion of the sun. Taken literally it is scientifically false but it is, nevertheless, semasiologically true, and in effective communication that is all that matters. Grave injustice has been often done to the Bible by people who failed to realize the simple fact that inevitably there is an anthropomorphic element in language (H. Guntert, *Grundfragen der Spraclzwissenschaft*, 1925). Usage, too, has the power of making a phrase that is non-scientific or even unscientific, legitimate communication. A phrase such as "electric current" reveals precisely nothing as to Michael Faraday's view of the nature of electricity.

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Language is, as we saw, the only conceivable means of communicating inaccessible matter, since it makes practicable the communication of communication. Its ability to cross dimensional limits and to traffic in materials free from all spatial limitations points to it as the medium by which the "relativity" barrier might be overcome. Men have long realized that the universe in which they find themselves cannot provide an absolute unit of measurement. It may seem to some a little odd that man with his multiplicity of measuring units is unable to measure. From ancient times we find him busy with measurements using as units dimensions derived from parts of his own body: the foot, the handbreadth, and the ell (the forearm). What he never stopped to ask himself was: "What is really the actual size of my foot?" If he had, he would have discovered that he had no means of ascertaining whether he was a pygmy or a giant. All sizes are relative; in fact, if all consciousness were suspended for a moment of time and in that moment the universe, including all laws such as the relativity of light, was reduced to a thousandth of its present size, we would have no means of verifying the change. Were this disability restricted to spatial measurement, no great harm would come of it but, alas, it invitiates all human judgments. Man can't, for instance, measure mental entities; he can only state their magnitude in terms of an arbitrary norm, called normality, but no self-respecting psychologist would undertake to define normality. We can easily imagine a society in which intellectual conditions very different from ours obtained, where children in the kindergarten already knew as much as our intellectual giants. Spiritual entities, too, are under the ban; if man can't measure even an earthly city, how could he presume to measure the City of God?

Our position is something like that of spectators watching a film of a puppet show. To discover the real size of the puppets, they would require to know the distance, when filming, of the camera from the puppets, and again, the distance of the projector from the screen. Normally, about the former, all information would be inaccessible. Their only hope of ascertaining the actual size of the puppets would be if, inadvertently, the hand of a manipulator appeared on the screen. Then they would know at once the size of a puppet relative to that of a human being. One appearance would be sufficient to break the deadlock and to disclose the dimensions in terms of their measuring system.

This analogy deals with only one aspect of the problem and is, like all analogies, inadequate. Analogical reasoning, however, is here, as is often the case, the only form of reasoning at our disposal. No problem can escape the deadlock of relativity. As no absolute is available, there can be no absolute judgment. We can count, add, subtract, and multiply, but we can't measure. We know nothing whatever about the actual size of the units that form the basis of our calculations. It is reason itself that has drawn attention to our dilemma, and it is reason that has admitted its own limitations. Reason and revelation are not necessarily in conflict. They are not to be envisaged as

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intersecting lines, not even as converging lines; they are parallel lines going in opposite directions: reason earthwards (and in that we include the universe), and revelation heavenwards, beyond relativity. We may best understand the implications of all this if we take another analogy.

Man finds himself, as it were, aboard a ship, afloat on a vast and vacant ocean. He has never seen land. He has calculated the size of the ship from that of his own body, but he is as

ignorant of real size as if he were looking at "a painted ship upon a painted ocean" without the presence of some object to lend it scale. Such a picture might be of a model floating in a tank, as may happen in the world of films, the producer knowing full well that by excluding everything that might indicate scale, his illusion is fool-proof. The passengers in our ship, it is true, have discovered much about our ingenious home: the design of the hull, the wonderful and invisible waves that surround it, the remarkable nature of the materials from which it is constructed. Nevertheless, much as we admire their discoveries, we should not forget when we read treatises on, say, the molecule, that the wonder is not the treatise but the molecule itself. No book, no lecture, could be half so wonderful as this microcosm, a discovery and not an invention of man. Men, even clever men, often forget that philosophically they have no more to do with the creation of truth than clocks have to do with the creation of time. Their role is merely to record, and their goal is to bring their record more and more into accord with objective truth. Not every part of the ship, however, is accessible to them; as they know nothing of a chart-room, destination to them is meaningless. How this "space-ship" got into its present orbit, what keeps it there, or what is the nature of the remote control, are problems that apparently can't be answered. A knowledge of design is interesting, a knowledge of destination and destiny is imperative. Even the seemingly simple task of measuring the ship, they find, is beyond their powers. All they can say about the size of the ship in which they find themselves by nothing of their own doing, is that it contains a certain number of arbitrary units, that is, they can calculate, but the unit itself they can't measure. They can divide it into smaller and smaller units, but wherever they stop, the last unit can't be measured. All sizes are necessarily stated in terms of the size of some object within the ship, or by means of a measuring-unit obtained by taking a fraction of the perimeter of the ship as, for example, the meter. Until comparatively recent times all measuring systems have been predominant anthropocentric, the human foot being a great favorite. For the measurement of mental quantities the head, or rather, the contents of the "head" of an average passenger, provides the norm. Man's awareness of all this convinces him there must be a realm where absolute magnitude exists. A message from that realm might enable him to make the necessary deductions, and a messenger from there could break the deadlock of relativity. Even one single footprint of such a being would be sufficient to enable him to ascertain his own magnitude in relation to an absolute standard. The Bible claims to know both, a message transmitted to certain men once passengers on the ship, and

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the royal visit of the Lord of that realm, who accommodated himself to our human limitations, walking across the impassable ocean and bringing with him part of the message explaining the mystery of our relativity-bound existence, and of our ultimate destiny. No one who has ever read the Gospels thoughtfully could fail to detect that this Messenger is applying to the fabric of human society a measuring-unit radically different from that in common use. Measured by the latter, the activity of society is an end in itself, consisting of grave, sober creatures going about the serious business of real and earnest living; measured by Him, it is the playing of petulant children in the market-place. Often the results of his measuring are much more startling, resulting in a complete reversal of human values.

When some philosophers began to assert the universal applicability of the theory of relativity, and the consequent invalidity of all cosmic standards, they were probably not aware that Paul

had a word to say on the matter. It is in II Corinthians 10:13. A fairly literal translation of the passage would read something like this:

> Since we do not dare to reckon ourselves among or compare ourselves with certain who commend themselves, but they in measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves have no discernment. We shall not indeed boast in (regard to) non-measurable things, but according to the measure of the standard (or measuring-rod), which the God of measure has marked off for us, to extend also to you.

Intra-cosmic comparisons at whatever level, science would now tell us, have no ultimate value and in this it has the concurrence of Paul. His use of the word *ametra*, the imponderables, the non-measurable things, is highly significant, as is his claim to possess an extra-cosmic measuring unit.

Paul's emphasis on verbal communication as the vehicle for our knowledge of God, and the absence of a reference to any other channel, permits us to assume that also the knowledge of this absolute standard was conveyed in linguistic terms. When we think of the potentiality of language, we would surely hesitate to say that such a thing was impossible. Language seemingly either possesses or can adapt existing terms to serve as verbal deputies for every kind of reality. In many lyric poems, for example, the poet provides an experience with a verbal deputy of such a nature that when it is read or heard it reproduces in a kindred spirit the impact of that experience. The wording of the poem is an indivisible unity standing for an experience which itself may have no name. Paul believed in the supra-human character of the communications vouchsafed to him, and that a corpus of such communications was also in existence. In Romans 1:2 he refers to them as "the holy scriptures." He believed they originated with God, otherwise in this relativity-bound cosmos they would have been valueless. He says in II Timothy 3:16, "Every scripture is God-breathed." As the sentence is a verbless sentence, the only permissible translation is one in which the "is" is supplied. Peter, writing in his second letter, is more explicit. He says (1:21) "For no

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prophecy was ever brought by the will of man, but men led by the Holy Spirit spoke from God."

The language in which they spoke was human language and it would seem that the men were providentially prepared for the task they were to perform. In using language, God accommodated himself to a humanly created instrument. This is the implication of the statement in Genesis 2:19, "And God brought them [the creatures] to the man to see what he would call them, and whatever he called a living creature, that was its name." Thus what God gave to man was more wonderful than the gift of a ready-made language; it was nothing less than the ability to create language.

The language of the Bible shares all the characteristics of human language; if it had been otherwise it would have been incomprehensible to us. As we call the Bible the Old and New Testaments, perhaps it would not be out of place here to quote the words of a president of the English Probate Court.

> I have been long impressed with the wisdom of the rule, now, I believe, universally adopted, at least in Courts of law, that, in construing all written instruments, the grammatical and ordinary sense of the words is to be adhered to, unless that would lead to some absurdity, or some repugnance, or inconsistency with the rest of the instrument, in which case the grammatical and ordinary sense of the words may be modified, so as to avoid that absurdity and inconsistency, but no further (S. T. Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*).

There is seldom any doubt as to whether a given phrase in the Bible is to be taken in a literal or metaphorical sense. It soon becomes apparent when we read the Gospels that certain statements are not intended to be taken in a literal sense. When our Lord said to the Jews in John 2:19, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," he was using metaphorical language of the type found in Psalm 144:12. Again, there is no evidence that at the present time any body of Christians interprets in a literal sense the statement in Matthew 5:29 about the removal of an offending right eye. Hebrew in particular, a language not rich in abstract nouns, often resorts to the use of concrete for the abstract. Thus the names of bodily organs are used to express mental and volitional qualities, for instance, the heart for the seat of the will and emotions. Physical attitudes are used to describe psychological states; "the face falls" can mean "to be sullen." The cause often expresses the effect, e.g., "mouth" in the meaning of "speech." Coleridge's remark on this is worth quoting, for he rightly perceived its wider application: "Of the figures of speech in the sacred volume, that are only figures of speech, the one of most frequent occurrence is that which describes an effect by the name of its most usual and best known cause: the passages, for instance, in which grief, fury, repentance, etc., are attributed to the Deity." Nevertheless in a preceding remark he had laid down a principle that does credit to his usual sound linguistic sense: "To retain the literal sense, wherever the harmony of Scripture permits, and reason does not forbid,

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is ever the honester, and, nine times in ten, the more rational and pregnant interpretation" (*ibid.*).

It must ever be borne in mind that the function of language is that of a deputy or surrogate of a fact or reality. The word is the prescription and not the medicine, the sign and not the destination. It is, as it were, the stage-player and not the real character, and thus is, in a sense, unreal. It was perhaps something like this that moved Sir Napier Shaw in a work as scientifically prosaic as his *Manual of Meteorology* to write a passage which W. E. Collinson applied to certain syntactical theories: "Every theory of the course of events in nature is necessarily based on some process of simplification of the phenomena and is to some extent therefore a fairy-tale" (*Lingua*, 1948) . The need to make the distinction between the word as a deputy and the reality which it represented formed the substance of a rebuke administered by our Lord to the Jews in John 5:39, "You search the scriptures, because you think that in them ye have eternal life, and *those* are *they* which are bearing witness of me." The words of Scripture were not an end in themselves; their function was to point. They were the testament, not the estate. They contained the prescription for eternal life, but they themselves bore not the leaves of the tree of life. It was the distinction, now recognized by all linguists, between the sign and the thing signified, the vehicle of the meaning and the thing meant. The Authorized Version, with its "they are they," brings out the sense better than some modern translations, which seem to miss the point. He was not rebuking them for searching the

Scriptures, but for making the wrong use of their evidential value. It was the subjective side that invested the objective side, the written words, with their real value. It was their purpose to introduce men to God, so that they, too, might by his grace cross the dimensional boundary between them and enter into the "I-thou" relationship, but, alas, they were preoccupied not even with the "I-He" relationship but only the "I-it." Had they but known it, the quintessence of the subjective side of Scripture had become temporarily a personal reality before their eyes. The Jews had failed to distinguish between the signpost and the destination to which it pointed. The signpost had become to them an end in itself;[2] a meaning was sought in every dimension, a mystery in every angle. Reverence had been replaced by superstition and faith by fetishism. The message on the direction board, which was a matter of life and death for lost travellers and could have changed men from indifferent wanderers into dedicated pilgrims, was obscured by a mound of cabalistic fancies. Its unspectacular appearance, perhaps, prevented them from realizing its unique

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and irreplaceable character; it alone could restore the lost sense of direction; even a street plan of the celestial city would not have enabled a prodigal in the far country to start on the homeward journey; for this it was absolutely necessary that he should know the way. Alas, for many now as then a signpost is too mundane, and they lend a ready ear to every talkative passerby, and hanker after the fortunetelling "gypsy."

It is true that, superficially considered, the Bible has much in common with many mundane books. It contains much that concerns the history of a small nation, part of which could have been known from ordinary historical sources. Where then is the evidence of the extra-cosmic character of this information? It is evident in what was selected and in what was rejected. What person in any period before 500 B.C. was in a position to apply to historical incidents a scale of importance since verified by subsequent history? Who could have surmised that records of one of the smallest nations of the Ancient Semitic East would become a major factor in some of the world's greatest civilizations, and that the descendants of this small nation would never disappear from the pages of history? Why are the historical portions of this Book unique in the field of historical writings? Because of their delineation of character, and their unerring ability to trace a development, however seemingly insignificant, back to its true source. From the historical writings of the great neighbors of Israel we learn much of the military campaigns and civic achievements of their kings, but nothing of their character. What uncanny sense did the Old Testament writers possess to see that David the sovereign was subservient to David the sinner?

The linguistic form of revelation as its objective counterpart differentiates it from all private and esoteric communications, and constitutes it a manifesto of evidential value. The Bible claims to be ultra-human and consequently contains much that is professedly beyond reason, but not thereby contrary to reason. A dispassionate rational investigation will reveal that it

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[2] The Pharisees were not, of course, engaged in the modern debate over semantics. They failed to grasp what the words signified, and assigned the verbal symbols an incorrect intellectual content. But the Pharisees were interested in *gennatria* (already used in the Epistle of Barnabas and one of the 32 Middoth). See the many statements in the Talmud about the nature of the Torah: Like the throne of glory, it was created; it was one of the seven things created before the creation of the world; it was written down by God in eternity. To deny this excluded one from the future world.—ED.

lacks nothing essential and contains nothing superfluous to the purpose in hand, namely, the revelation of the will of God for lost humanity. It consistently maintains the principle of non-compulsion, the freedom of resistibility, and the inadequacy of externalism. In the Old Testament it is the person of the coming One, in the New, of him who came and shall come, that supplies the unifying theme.

It would now seem that the early Church Fathers "built better than they knew," when they chose the word "canon" to define the corpus of authoritative writings comprising the divine revelation. The word "canon" is literally a "measuring-rod." It was in all probability a loan-word in Greek from some Semitic cognate of the Hebrew *qaneh*, rod, which was also applied to a certain measuring-unit, as we, too, use "rod" for a standard measure. In our plight we can no longer be content to take our bearings from the light at our own masthead. The alternative to the acceptance of an extraneous standard is to perish. It is the fateful "either-or": either we live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God or we die (Matt. 4:4).

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