

REASON AND REVELATION

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Reason and Revelation by Robert S. Candlish

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REVELATION**



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By

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Preface.

EDINBURGH, 15th January 1864.

I HAVE been, rather unexpectedly, asked by the Publishers to sanction a new issue of this little work, which, I thought, had gone very far into oblivion. So convinced was I of its being among forgotten things, that I had little scruple in using one of its treatises, revised and re-written, as my Introductory Lecture to the Students of the New College, at the opening of the present session. This has, somewhat to my surprise, led to my views on the subject of the Inspiration of the Bible being pretty freely canvassed. In point of fact, I have advanced no original views. All that I have said may be found, in germ and principle, in the works of Gaussen, Lee of Cambridge, and Tayler Lewis of America.* My object has been simply to place the doctrine which these writers, as well as others of older

* Dr. Lee's work is known to scholars. I hope we are soon to have a new edition of it, for it is invaluable. Tayler Lewis's little book has been republished in this country, with a recommendatory preface from the pen of one most competent to judge of its merits, the Rev. Dr. Henderson of Glasgow. I thoroughly agree with Dr. Henderson in all that he says in its praise. It is a singularly fresh, original, thoughtful treatise, and ought to be in the hands of all students and inquirers.

date, have scientifically expounded, in a plain and popular light. For it seems to me high time that this should be done. And the stir which my Introductory Lecture has occasioned makes me feel this more than ever. The real question must be fairly stated. My attempt to state it fairly—it is all that I have attempted—has been misunderstood in some quarters, and misrepresented in others. I mean to try to state it again in this preface.

I think I can best do this, in the way of offering some remarks on the references which have been made to my statements by Bishop Colenso and the Duke of Argyll. I do not class these two together, as of the same mind in this matter. Very far from it. I merely mean to say that I have now to deal, not with anonymous criticism, but with the comments of men high in Church and State.

The Prelate must take precedence of the Peer, being first in hand.

It is in the preface to the recently published fourth part of his "Pentateuch and Book of Joshua Critically Examined," that the Bishop does me the honour of mentioning me. And to what he says of me there I confine my attention.

His mode of quotation is peculiar.* Let the first of his three quotations serve as a specimen:—

* To prevent mistakes, I must explain that whatever I give of Colenso's book is given exactly as printed there; the italics, dashes, dots, &c., being all his own; ornaments of literature of his own devising. I have no fancy for them, and use none of them.

"All that is in Scripture is not Revelation strictly so called,—[which means, I suppose, 'All that is in the Bible, is not, in the strict and proper sense, the Word of God.'] To a large extent, Scripture is a record of human affairs—of the sayings and doings of men. Is it to be held and considered infallible, when it narrates the wars of kings, and inserts the genealogies of tribes and families, as well as when it announces an express oracle of heaven, or authoritatively promulgates Divine doctrines and commands?"—(Preface, pages xvii. xviii.)

Here I state a fact, and ask a question. My statement of the fact he breaks into two fragments—the first being significantly italicized—by an interpolated innuendo. The interpolation shows either gross ignorance or deliberate dishonesty. I impute to him only the former. He evidently does not know what "Revelation strictly so called" means. If he did, he could not have found such a world's wonder in so plain a truism as this,—that the Bible records not only what God says and does, but also what man says and does. I maintain strongly that "all that is in the Bible is in the strict and proper sense the Word of God." It is God's inspired and infallible record of his Revelation, and of the human affairs—the sayings and doings of men—with which it has pleased him that his Revelation should be mixed up. This is my answer to the question which I put,—as the Bishop must have known if he had read either my lecture or my book. He has the boldness to represent my putting of the question as implying the opposite answer. It is an artifice of controversy, happily not now common.

There is, indeed, in the Bishop's next quotation,* an

* "What God had to communicate to man, was to be communicated not all at once, but, as it were, piecemeal. This, I cannot but think, affords a strong pre-

attempt to convict me of inconsistency. It is a singularly constructed quotation, bringing together scraps from passages far apart, and dovetailing them ingeniously into a sort of mosaic pavement. To make one out, in that way, to be self-contradictory, may or may not be right and fair. But it can be neither right nor fair to say this of me,—not in the small type of a quotation, or quasi-quotation, from my book,—but in his own good, large-type, conclusive, summing up:—

“He still asserts his belief in an ‘infallible guidance,’—an ‘infallible superintendence,’—such as to maintain even a ‘verbal accuracy.’ But this does not extend to such matters as the ‘wars of kings’ and the ‘genealogies of tribes and

sumption in favour of what is called plenary inspiration. It suggests a reason why God should from the very beginning, and all throughout, exercise such a superintendence over the committing of his communications to writing, as to secure even the *verbal accuracy* of the record. . . . Properly speaking, it (Holy Scripture) has but one author, the Holy Ghost, throughout. All the books of it are His; *He is responsible for them all*: and, being so, *He is entitled to the same measure of justice at our hands, which an ordinary writer may claim (!)*. . . . It is not simply God speaking to man, and man listening to God. It is rather God coming down to earth, mixing Himself up with its ongoing, and *turning to His own account (!)* the sayings and doings of its inhabitants. Hence the need of discrimination. . . . I can see no reason why the HOLY SPIRIT (!) should not use the same latitude that a truthful man would use, when minute exactness is not necessary, and is not pretended,—as, for instance, in the use of round numbers, or in the customary ways of reckoning genealogies, or in the reporting of speeches, where the precise words are not material. Nay, more: I imagine that a man, writing under the assurance of Divine guidance, *might be even less careful than he would otherwise have felt himself bound to be (!)*. . . . I can well imagine that Evangelists and Apostles may have been led to use more freedom than they would otherwise have ventured upon in dealing with the Old Testament Scriptures, and connecting them with the New Dispensation, by the very fact of their being under *infallible guidance*. . . . I confess that, on any other supposition than that of *infallible guidance*, considering the usual scrupulosity of Jewish Doctors, with reference to the very letter of their sacred writings, the free mode of citation, practised by New Testament writers, seems to me all but inexplicable.”—(Preface, page xviii.)

families,—that is, I presume, to matters *non-essential* to human salvation,—in other words, to God's design in giving the Revelation."—(Page xix.)

It requires some stretch of charity to imagine that this is ignorant and not wilful misrepresentation. If he has read what he is quoting from, Colenso must know that I hold the exact reverse of what he here deliberately imputes to me. He is at liberty to argue,—which, however, he has not attempted to do,—that I cannot consistently hold the opinion which I avow. But he is not at liberty to assert that I hold the diametrically opposite opinion. This is what he has not scrupled to do.

Having made me say the contrary of what I do say, he goes on to refute the doctrine thus imputed to me:—

"The question then arises, as to what parts are essential, and what not. And of this, as Dr. Candlish does and must allow, we short-sighted creatures cannot possibly be the judges. We may imagine things to be essential, which in the plan and ordering of the Divine Wisdom are *not* essential; and therefore, though assuming an 'infallible superintendence,' we are utterly unable to judge *a priori* what parts of Scripture *must* be recorded with strict verbal accuracy."—(Page xix.)

Of course not. But that is the very argument which I have urged at some length for our belief that all "parts of Scripture must be recorded with strict verbal accuracy," if we are to be sure of our having what is "essential." Or, to put the statement in better Theology, if not in better English, I have argued that God, giving to us a Revelation of his mind and will, in the manner in which it has seemed good to him to give it,—that is, mixed up with mundane