

**THE TRUTH OF THE EVANGELICAL
HISTORY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST:
PROVED, IN OPPOSITION TO DR. D. F.
STRAUSS, THE CHIEF OF MODERN
DISBELIEVERS IN REVELATION, PART I**

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WILLIAM GILLESPIE

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OF OUR
LORD JESUS CHRIST:

PROVED, IN OPPOSITION TO
DR D. F. STRAUSS,
THE CHIEF OF MODERN DISBELIEVERS IN REVELATION.

BY
WILLIAM GILLESPIE,
AUTHOR OF "THE NECESSARY EXISTENCE OF GOD," &c., &c.

Οὐ γὰρ ἀσσεφισμένοις μύθοις ἠξακολουθήσαντες.

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PREFACE.

THE question of questions of the day regards the inspiration of the Scriptures. If the inspiration of the Scriptures be not itself *the* topic, it is intimately connected with *the* topic. The question of the day is, after all, Is there a God? a personal, or a truly living, God: A God whom I can glorify and enjoy; in distinction from, indeed in opposition to, the dead God of pure Deism—who, if not a negation, is yet almost wholly negative in his relation to man.

Now, a God whom I can glorify and enjoy must be a God who comes down to me. He must come down to me in order that I may go up to Him. He must communicate with me. We must have something in common: at the least, we must have a common ground of approach to each other.

In the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God-man, the Infinite and the finite meet. God is present as the Eternal Son; and man is present by the human soul and body of our Lord: and, through this God-man, humanity—all men have access to God.

And, *supposing* the Bible be really plenary inspired, we have here, also, the Divine and the human meeting together, and forming a one. We have the Divine in the *given* contents of the communication; and we have the human in the *channel* through which the communication has flowed, or, to speak more properly, floweth.

In fine, the grand question is, Have we in, and with, this human of the Scriptures, the Divine? Have we, in truth, a revelation from God? This is really the grand question for you and me. For if that question falls to be answered in the affirmative, you and I have a God who has made himself accessible to us: and a God accessible to us is the very thing you, brother, and I want. This is the very thing for which man, consciously or unconsciously, is everywhere longing and indeed pining—yea, for which, as glorious though remote end, the whole creation itself groaneth and travaileth in pain.

There are certain things which are very intimately connected with each other, although the connection may not be by any means apparent on a mere superficial consideration, or on consideration of one only of the things. There are two things of which the connection is the closest, whether the connection be apparent to you or not. The two things are (first) a fallible and occasionally failing Written Word, and (secondly) a fallible and occasionally failing, — peccable and sometimes peccant, Personal Word. 'Tis the case that we must pass, in the way of logical sequence, from a humanly imperfect Revelation to an imperfect human, namely, a human with other than sinless capabilities, in the person of the God-man. When you bestow upon the message from heaven a fallible and erring human investment, you necessitate the introduction of the correspondent analogue. The divine messenger is become incarnate in a failing or erring human organism; and *failing or erring* is but a sort of euphemism for the capacity of taking a sinful, perhaps sinning, direction.

Some distinguish between Revelation and the history of the Revelation, or between the heavenly Revelation and the earthly record of that Revelation. And while the persons alluded to may maintain that the Revelation itself *was* Divine, they are ready to admit that the record in which the Revelation is, in a fashion, enclosed, is erroneous in many respects. For example,

our *Soame Jenyns* delighted to distinguish, in a marked manner, the Christian Revelation from the enveloping record, *where only it is that we have the traces of the same*. The author in question has had many to follow him in making such a distinction. Let us listen to the leader, who addresses us in his own admirable English.

“Others there are, who allow, that a revelation from God may be both necessary and credible; but allege, that the Scriptures, that is, the books of the Old and New Testament, cannot be that Revelation; because in them are to be found errors and inconsistencies, fabulous stories, false facts, and false philosophy; which can never be derived from the fountain of all wisdom and truth. To this I reply, that I readily acknowledge that the scriptures are not revelations from God, but the history of them: The revelation itself is derived from God; but the history of it is the production of men, and therefore the truth of it is not in the least affected by their fallibility, but depends on the internal evidence of its own supernatural excellence. If in these books such a religion, as has been here described, actually exists, no seeming, or even real, defects to be found in them can disprove the divine origin of this religion, or invalidate my argument.” “The want of this obvious distinction has much injured the Christian cause; because on this ground it has ever been most successfully attacked, and on this ground it is not easily to be defended: for if the records of this revelation are supposed to be the revelation itself, the least defect discovered in them must be fatal to the whole. What has led many to overlook this distinction, is the common phrase, that the scriptures are the word of God; and in one sense they certainly are; that is, they are the sacred repository of all the revelations, dispensations, promises, and precepts, which God has vouchsafed to communicate to mankind; but by this expression we are not to understand, that every part of this voluminous collection of historical, poetical, prophetic, theological, and moral writings which we call the Bible, was dictated by the immediate influence of divine inspiration: The authors of these books pretend to no such infallibility, and if they claim it not for themselves, who has authority to claim it for them? Christ required no such belief from those who were willing to be his disciples. He says, ‘He that believeth on me hath everlasting life;’ but where does he say, He that believeth not every word contained

“ in the Old Testament, which was then extant, or every word in
“ the New Testament, which was to be wrote for the instruction of
“ future generations, hath not everlasting life ? There are innume-
“ rable occurrences related in the scriptures, some of greater, some
“ of less, and some of no importance at all ; the truth of which we
“ can have no reason to question, but the belief of them is surely
“ not essential to the faith of a Christian : I have no doubt but that
“ St Paul was shipwrecked, and that he left his cloak and his
“ parchments at Troas ; but the belief of these facts makes no part
“ of Christianity, nor is the truth of them any proof of its
“ authority. It proves only that this apostle could not in
“ common life be under the perpetual influence of infallible in-
“ spiration ; for, had he been so, he would not have put to sea be-
“ fore a storm, nor have forgot his cloak. These writers were un-
“ doubtedly directed by supernatural influence in all things necessary
“ to the great work, which they were appointed to perform : At
“ particular times, and on particular occasions, they were enabled
“ to utter prophecies, to speak languages, and to work miracles ;
“ but in all other circumstances, they seem to have been left to the
“ direction of their own understandings, like other men. In the
“ sciences of history, geography, astronomy, and philosophy, they
“ appear to have been no better instructed than others, and there-
“ fore were not less liable to be misled by the errors and prejudices
“ of the times and countries in which they lived. They related
“ facts like honest men, to the best of their knowledge or infor-
“ mation, and they recorded the divine lessons of their master with
“ the utmost fidelity ; but they pretend to no infallibility ; for they
“ sometimes differed in their relations, and they sometimes disagreed
“ in their sentiments. All which proves only, that they did not
“ act, or write, in a combination to deceive, but not in the least im-
“ peaches the truth of the revelation which they published ; which
“ depends not on any external evidence whatever : For I will ven-
“ ture to affirm, that if any one could prove, what is impossible to
“ be proved, because it is not true, that there are errors in geography,
“ chronology, and philosophy, in every page of the Bible ; that the
“ prophecies therein delivered are all but fortunate guesses, or artful
“ applications, and the miracles there recorded no better than le-
“ gendary tales : if any one could shew, that these books were never
“ written by their pretended authors, but were posterior impositions
“ on illiterate and credulous ages : all these wonderful discoveries

“ would prove no more than this, that God, for reasons to us unknown, had thought proper to permit a revelation by him communicated to mankind, to be mixed with their ignorance, and corrupted by their frauds, from its earliest infancy, in the same manner in which he has visibly permitted it to be mixed, and corrupted from that period to the present hour. If in these books a religion superior to all human imagination actually exists, it is of no consequence to the proof of its divine origin, by what means it was there introduced, or with what human errors and imperfections it is blended. A diamond, though found in a bed of mud, is still a diamond, nor can the dirt which surrounds it, depreciate its value or destroy its lustre.”— *View of the Internal Evidence of the Christian Religion.*

In such excellent English our author treats of the Scriptures as *not revelations from God, but the history of them.* He allows that *the Revelation itself was derived from God*; but, then, *the history of it is the production of men.* The records of the Revelation are very carefully distinguished from the Revelation itself. Thus, then, such a writer draws a strongly marked line of division between the heavenly message and the fallible earthly case in which it is enclosed, and by which it is indeed polluted. Such a one would say, that the Revelation which is the subject-matter of the Four Gospels (for I desire to speak of them) came from Heaven upwards of 1800 years ago: Yet the Revelation itself we have not; we have, in those four books of Scripture, no more than the history of the Revelation. There was given, 1855 years or so ago, the Revelation, and we have it not: what we have is merely a history of that Revelation. We have a human record effected, and indeed affected, by fallible, yea sinful, men: and, of course, the record partakes largely of the weaknesses and faults of its authors.

This is just the theory adopted in substantial by the modern German school, represented by such men as *Olshausen*, *Neander*, and *Tholuck*. Only it must be explained that, if our *Soame Jenyns*, shamefaced (as became his modest English nature) at the idea of being without the decent cloak of equivocal suppositions, writes hypothetically of the shortcomings