

Articles and Sermons :: The Passion for Reality ~ Chambers

The Passion for Reality ~ Chambers - posted by crsschk (), on: 2006/9/29 9:17

﻿Job 38-41﻿

We cannot kindle when we will The fire which in the heart resides; The spirit bloweth and is still, In mystery our soul abides. But tasks in hours of insight willÂ'd Can be through hours of gloom fulfillÂ'd With aching hands and bleeding feet We dig and heap, lay stone on stone; We bear the burden and the heat Of the long day, and wish Â'﻿twere done, Not till the hours of light return. All we have built do we discern.

Matthew Arnold
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The word Â'﻿Reality﻿Â' is used to represent the realm of God and the whole of mankind in correspondence. The creeds give us a theological statement of God, but JobÂ's experience proves that a statement of belief does not give us God. The only way we get at God is through conscience, because through conscience we get at the moral relation to things. We have seen that Job would not bow down to an authority which had not its basis in what was right in actual life. God has to clear Himself from the wrong presentation given of Him by the friends, and although Job is right in repudiating their presentation, God rebukes him for remaining too much of an agnostic, and He leads him out along the line indicated when he said ﻿Â'﻿Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him,﻿Â'﻿ i.e., Â'﻿I will trust that God is what my innate manhood tells me He must be.﻿Â' The authority we blindly grope after is God Himself, not a tendency making for righteousness, not a set of principles. Behind Reality is God Himself, and the final authority is a personal relationship. Christianity is a personal relationship to a personal God on the ground of the Redemption. The reason Jesus Christ is our Lord and Master is not first because He is God Incarnate, but because He is easily first in the human domain.

1. The Still Small Voice of God (﻿Job 38:1-4a﻿)

﻿Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou Me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? . . .﻿ (﻿see also Job 40:6-7﻿)

God arraigns both Elihu and Job, He appeals to them to come before Him on the basis of their actual knowledge, and while being true to the facts they know, to leave room for facts they do not know. ﻿The still small voice﻿ is an appeal not to a superstitious belief in God, but to the actuality of God to man. God disposes altogether of a relationship to Himself born of superstitious dread—Â'﻿No, stand like a man, and listen to facts as they are.﻿Â' God counsels Job—Â'﻿Don't come to too hasty a conclusion, but gird up your loins like a man and wait. You have done right so far in that you would not have Me misrepresented, but you must recognise that there are facts you do not know, and wait for Me to give the revelation of them on the ground of your moral obedience.﻿Â' Job would not bow before God on the basis of superstition; he could not conceive such a God to be worthy. The ground of appeal is not that God says I must do a certain thing, but that the manhood in me recognises that what God says is likely to be right. Jesus Christ never coerced anyone; He never used the apparatus of sacerdotalism or of supernatural powers, or what we understand by revivals; He faced men on the ground on which all men stood, and refused to stagger human wits into submission to Himself.

2. The Sub-Scientific Value of Immanence (﻿Job 38:4b-41﻿)

Â'﻿Immanence﻿Â' means the notion of the immediate presence of God pervading everything, and the pantheist says that this view explains everything. Elihu is stating with enormous airs that Â'﻿Humanity﻿Â' is another name for God; whereas one of the big Bible doctrines is that Humanity is not God, and was created to be distinctly not God. There is evidence that God is in the facts of Nature, but also evidence that He is other than Nature. We may make a working definition of the laws of Nature, Â'﻿but, remember,﻿Â' says God, Â'﻿behind those laws I come.﻿Â'

Scientific dogmatism is as dangerous as religious dogmatism. Religious dogmatism takes a manÂ's experience and tells him why everything has happened; but every now and again things happen outside human experience which cannot be

explained. It is well to note what can be known, but no one has any right to be dogmatic about the things which cannot be known saving by revelation. We can state scientific laws so far as we have been able to discover them, but we are outside our domain if we say that those laws govern regions we know nothing about. Inferences based on the facts I know will never enable me to find God. I may study all the facts of geology and natural history, but where does the note of authority come in it all? The note of authority comes only through conscience. Laws are effects, not causes. If we can know God by means of our intellect, then Jesus Christ's claim to reveal God is a farce, and the Redemption nonsense.

Job declared that he could not know God—"I do not know God," he says, "but I do know that the God you describe in your creed cannot be God, because in order to make Him God you have to deny facts which I know." The friends said that the way out was to accept the agnostic position and become a fatalist—"Don't try to find out whether God's character is noble and right," and they ended in telling an untruth about God. God says, "When I reveal Myself it will be as the God of the morality you know," and yet we must never tie God up along the line of subjective experience.

The only reality in life is moral reality, not intellectual or aesthetic. Religion based on intellectualism becomes purely credal, Jesus Christ is not needed in it. The intellect does not get us at Reality, neither do the emotions alone, but conscience does, as soon as it relates itself to these two. The basis of things is not rational. Reason and intellect are our guides among things as they are, but they cannot explain things as they are. For instance, it is not rational that Christian nations should be at war. The basis of things is tragic, and intellect makes a man shut his eyes to this fact and become a superior person. One of the great crimes of intellectual philosophy is that it destroys a man as a human being and turns him into a supercilious spectator; he cuts himself off from relationship with human stuff as it is and becomes a statue.

A moral man, i.e., the man who will do the right and be the right thing in actual life, is more likely than any other kind of man to recognise God when He manifests Himself. If I become a devotee of a creed I cannot see God unless He comes along my line. It takes the whole man—conscience, intellect, will and emotions, to discover God as Reality. The man who is standing well within his own right, whose conscience is not yet awakened, feels no need of God. "I did not come to call him," said Jesus. But let a man come up against things, and he will find not a creed or a doctrine, but the Reality of God. The elemental facts a man comes up against transform his stubbornness into amenableness to Reality.

3. The Supernormal Vindication of Morality (Job 39-41)

Wilt thou also disannul My judgment? wilt thou condemn Me that thou mayest be righteous? (Job 40:8-9)

In these chapters the whole of the universe is symbolised, and whatever the universe is, it is not tame. A certain type of modern science would have us believe it is, that we can harness the sea and air and earth. Quite true, you can, if you only read scientific manuals and deal with successful experiments; but before long you discover elements which knock all your calculations on the head and prove that the universe is wild and unmanageable. And yet in the beginning God intended man to control it; the reason he cannot is because he twisted God's order; instead of recognising God's dominion over himself, man became his own god, and by so doing lost control of everything else (see Genesis 3-9).

When Jesus Christ came He was easily Master of the life in the air and earth and sky, and in Him we see the order God originally intended for man. If you want to know what the human race is to be like on the basis of the Redemption, you will find it mirrored in Jesus Christ—a perfect oneness between God and man, no gap; in the meantime there is a gap, and the universe is wild, not tame. Every type of superstition pretends it can rule the universe, the scientific quack proclaims he can control the weather, that he has occult powers and can take the untameable universe and tame it. God says it cannot be done.

Oswald Chambers

Baffled to fight better: Talks on the Book of Job.