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ART. I.—ST. STEPHEN'S SPEECH.

THE first martyrdom was illustrated by striking incidents and a dramatic scene, by deliberate testimony and vehement passions, by a vision of the Lord in glory, and by last words of faith and love, which teach us how to die. It was also the occasion of the first crisis to the Christian community—in its persecution, its scattering abroad, with the consequent diffusion of the Word, and yet further by its connection with the spiritual history of the "young man whose name was Saul." It has therefore afforded ample subjects for the commentator and precious topics for the preacher; but these are not within the present purpose, which is concerned only with the speech—first, in its relation to the situation at the time, but more especially in its office in the scheme of Scripture, and its permanent and present value for the faith of the Church.

Probably many readers besides the writer have at one time felt some slight surprise that the speech should have been what it was, and still more that it should be reported at such length by a narrator so accustomed to summarize action and abbreviate discourse. That would not have been done if he had not had a lively sense of the importance of the speech, and of its bearing on the whole history which he had in hand.

1. Stephen is before the hierarchical tribunal of his nation on a capital charge. "This man ceaseth not to speak against this holy place and the law; for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and change the customs which Moses delivered unto us. Then said the high priest, Are these things so?"

The answer is ready: "Brethren and fathers, hearken." Yet it seems scarcely relevant. As desiring to place himself and his hearers in the line of thought common to them both, he begins far back in the ages with the ancestor of the race and the commencement of revelation, and proceeds with deliberate detail through the history of God's dealings with the people till he reaches the building of the Temple and the days of the prophets. Is not this line of argument a far-fetched answer to the judicial question? It is really an answer to a much larger question—that of the whole situation which is involved in the trial itself. Whether the accused had or had not said this or that was of no consequence, in view of the great fact which was before the mind of the speaker, and which he had to bring before the mind of the judges. The comprehensive fact (if it can be so described) is the action of God in revelation through the course of time from the call of Abraham to the resurrection of Jesus. Separate prophecies had been alleged by Apostles, but Stephen will adduce the whole course of things as one predestined scheme. The grandeur of the view so exalted his soul that it gave a serene glory to his countenance, "and all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." He proceeded to unfold the story of this Divine action in the gradation of its stages and the unity of its plan; but the narrative, as he presented it, became an offence to the prejudices and an accusation to the conscience of his hearers. The institutions and prerogatives of Israel were seen, not as fixed and final, but as provisional and preparatory for what was to follow, so that, by inference, even the holy place and the customs which Moses delivered might be liable to the changes which he was accused of predicting. But worse than this was the history of opposition and enmity, which was shown to have accompanied the history of grace—in the jealousy and almost fratricide of the sons of Jacob, in the first rejection by the people of the mission of Moses, in their turning against him after their deliverance, in the apostasies and idolatries in the wilderness, and long afterwards in the persecutions and murders of the prophets. It was an undeniable history, and the men before whom it was unfolded were the true sons and followers of their fathers now, in their own generation "resisters of the Holy Ghost." Unhappily for themselves, it had been in the fatal day of decision; for as the record of grace had been consummated in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, so the record of enmity had been consummated in His rejection and crucifixion, and these were the men who had done it. The defence had become an indictment—a terrible indictment. As the speaker proceeded,

they caught the drift and felt the pressure of his argument, and their visible attitude of passionate fury precipitated the inspired denunciation at the close.

"They were cut to the heart, and gnashed upon him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. But they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and rushed upon him with one accord; and they cast him out of the city, and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. They stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

2. This short survey of the speech in its character, aim, and effect may be sufficient to show its fitness in relation to the actual situation at the time it was delivered. But the fulness of the report indicates something more—namely, a sense of its importance in the scheme of Christian doctrine, and of its permanent value for the faith of the Church.

The relations between the Old Testament and the New are intimate, manifold, and fundamental; and the instinct of the Church has ever recognised them as, in their very different measures, constituting an organic whole, one written Word, one Bible. But this result was secured through an early conflict. When the Messiah had "come to His own, and His own received Him not," Christianity was born in the midst of a Judaism which rejected and denounced it, while it claimed to be the predestined consummation of the religion of Israel, and the fulfilment of the promises and prophecies. This conflict was brought to a head in the trial of Stephen, in Jerusalem and before the rulers, while the Church was still only Jewish. His full assertion of the Christian position, crowned by an illustrious martyrdom, was a testimony which the dispersed disciples carried with them in all the movements which followed—to Samaria, Phœnicia, Cyprus, and Antioch. It was a prelude to the conversion of Saul and to St. Peter's baptism of the first Gentiles, and a preface to the Gospel which was preached throughout the world.

How largely the substance of that preface entered into the teaching of the Gospel, how truly that historic sketch involved a doctrinal scheme, the most cursory view of the Apostolic writings is sufficient to show. The place of "our father Abraham" in the speech is the same which in those writings he always holds. His call and obedience, the promises given to him, and, above all, the faith which received them, afford continual lessons in their application to the promises of the Gospel and the faith of Christians. The bondage in Egypt

and the deliverance from it are types of spiritual facts, and supply illustrative language for the doctrine of redemption. Moses at Sinai and the "living oracles" represent the dispensation of the law, which had so great a part in the Divine plan, and on which so much of St. Paul's exposition and dialectic argument is employed, showing it as a parenthesis in the greater history of grace. The rebellions and idolatries in the wilderness, with the sentence that ensued in the case of those who had been "baptized unto Moses," supplied a lasting warning to the recipients of the Christian Sacraments. "The tabernacle of witness," made according to the pattern showed in the Mount, opened out into the heavenly sanctuary and priesthood, as set forth in the Epistle to the Hebrews (an Epistle which has with the speech many close affinities). Thus, all the successive references which Stephen made to the Pentateuchal narrative were so many anticipations of its future use in the Christian Church, as well as so many testimonies of adherence to the national traditions; while, at the same time, his manner of citing them conveyed the true view of the events as changing scenes in a progressive drama. Very noticeable, too, is the perspicuity with which he sees the whole Mosaic economy of law and ritual as a stage in the course of revelation, truly Divine, yet given through created agency by the ministry of angels. "An angel," he says, "appeared to Moses in a flame of fire in the bush." "He was sent to be a ruler and a redeemer with the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush." Again, "He was in the Church in the wilderness with the angel which spake to him in the mount Sinai." And at last the charge is made: "Ye received the law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not." Why this insistence on the angelic ministry? Was it to glorify the law? It did glorify the law, by showing the human mediator as acting under immediate direction of heavenly powers, receiving what he delivered. Yet was there another comparison in Stephen's mind, lessening the glory of the law by a glory that excelled. He spoke from the level of a higher dispensation than that of which angels were the ministers. His thought is interpreted by his successors, who represent the law as "ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator, *till the seed should come to whom the promise was made*" (Gal. iii. 19). And it had come in the person of One "made so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they" (Heb. i. 4).

From the standpoint of the revelation in Jesus Christ, Stephen beheld in the past religious history of his race a great scheme of God, typical, prophetical, preparatory, leading on to its predestined end, through successive stages, changeable

forms, and transitory localization in Land or Temple. This was the view of things on which he reasoned with the men of his own sort, the Hellenist Jews of the African and Asiatic synagogues, who could not resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. This was the view which they characterized as blasphemy against Moses and against God, and which they formulated into an accusation of treason "against this holy place and the law, for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us." This was the view which was intended in the judicial question, "Are these things so?" the view which he maintained in his defence before the council, which brought down their passionate condemnation, which he sealed by martyrdom and left as an enduring testimony to the Church.

3. By it he, being dead, yet speaketh, and in our own generation with a force and effect beyond what the words had before, receiving as they do a fresh emphasis from contrast with voices of the day. We were wont to hear in this review of Old Testament history an exposition of its character: we now also hear it in affirmation of its truth. This testimony is all the stronger for the signs of independent knowledge or opinion which the speech contains. "No less than twelve of his references to the Mosaic history [as Dean Stanley has observed[1]] differ from it, either by variation or addition. The general fact of the adoption of these variations by Stephen is [he says] significant, as showing the freedom with which he handled the sacred history and the comparative unimportance assigned by him and his reporter to minute accuracy." However this may be, such shades of difference in incidental detail make more conspicuous the unhesitating confidence in the substantial facts. That, it may be said, could not be otherwise, when confidence in the sacred records was touched by no breath of suspicion; and Stephen could only speak as a man of his nation and time, as a Jew and not a German, of the first century, not the nineteenth. Still, the language of a man of illumination and insight has importance, not only at the time, but for perpetuity. It is to us an affirmation on a question of the day, that of the origin of the revelation which we have. We know what it is as given in the Scriptures—an origin of Divine initiation by intervention of God in definite acts and communications, through Abraham and the promises, through Moses and the law, through a course of special providence and the institution of significant ritual. This Divine initiation is recorded in a consecutive history as the ground of Israel's covenant relation to God.

[1] In Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible."

The present contention is that such special interventions did not take place, and the record of them must be put aside as quite unhistoric, a compilation of imaginative legends showing ideals of a late date, and composed largely in the interests of the priestly class; that the real history was one of evolution, as in other races where the religious ideas pass by degrees from their lowest elementary forms to the development which they ultimately attain, only that in Israel this process was distinguished by a more ethical character, and one that made for righteousness. There are various speculations how this was caused, but we are allowed to recognise in it a secret influence from God.

This hypothetical history has its ground in linguistic criticism of the documents, which are at present alleged to discredit the earlier stages of the written history; leaving it to be reconstructed out of inferences, probabilities, and resemblances elsewhere, a kind of argument which experts may advance, but of which others can judge as well as they. The result obtained is the disappearance from the region of truth and fact of the characters and events which have hitherto been most closely entwined with the commencements of revelation and the foundations of the faith, which in Psalms and Prophets are assumed as conditions of the national life, and which with us have afforded the most effective lessons in religion to students and to children, to the wise and to the unwise. We cannot but marvel at the complacency with which this great effacement is accepted by men whom we might have expected to feel deeply the loss which they endorse. As, for instance, when that accomplished writer George Adam Smith, in his "Lectures on Modern Critics and the Preaching of the Old Testament," summarily puts out of court the records of the Patriarchs and the Exodus, just granting them, if it be wished, such use for edification as belongs to parables or instructive fiction. Or, again, when we hear an eminent Churchman at the Church Congress of 1902 descant upon the good intentions with which "the authors of the Pentateuch took old traditions, and built up around them their spiritual creations," ascribing to these narratives the character of poetic dramas, with only such relation to actual fact as the tragedy of Macbeth has to the real history of Scotland. Yet it is not the supposed action of men, but the recorded action of God, which is thus airily treated. When Abraham is lost in the mist which has been raised, the promises and covenant which rule the after-history of the people have disappeared with him; and the successive ages, which looked back to that origin of their faith and hope, looked back to what was not there.

In this connection St. Stephen's testimony comes in. It is upon those earlier narratives which the critics set aside that the speech dilates with fulness and persistency, a compass measured by forty-five verses being given to the period from the call of Abraham to the settlement in Canaan, as compared with only eight devoted to the period of the Temple and the Prophets, though the latter included the most crucial topics and involved the decisive conclusion. Whatever was the reason, the effect is plain: it asserted the origination of the religion of Israel by distinct acts of Divine intervention. How directly does this testimony encounter the allegations of the critics! On the one side, the personality of the great ancestor is scarcely admitted, and his story counted as invention. On the other rises the unfaltering witness, "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia," with commemoration of covenant and promises made to him and to his seed. On the one side the traditional work of Moses as leader of the nation is just allowed, while his part in its religion is reduced to the narrowest limits and a few uncertain sentences. On the other, he is seen as the mediator of the law "with the angel that spake to him in Mount Sinai, receiving the living oracles to give unto us." On the one side we are told to regard the sacred Tabernacle as an ideal afterthought of a late age, to give the prestige of a Divine prototype to the Temple of the Monarchy, or (more likely) the Temple of the Return. On the other, we hear the firm statement: "Our fathers had the Tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, even as He appointed who spake unto Moses, that he should make it according to the figure which he had seen; which also our fathers brought in with Joshua when they entered on the possession of the nations."

Here are two opposite views of the history, the one in accordance with the documentary narrative, the other a reversal of it. St. Stephen sees the revelation of God as communicated through certain persons at certain times, giving guidance by promise, law, and symbol, to faith, duty, and worship, and so creating a religion differing from all the religions of the world. He sees it opposed and resisted through all its stages, never more so than now in its last stage, when the final revelation has come. He sees in it a great plan of God, to the beginning of which he testifies by word, to the completion of which he will testify by death.

St. Stephen's view is that of the previous generations of his people and of the Christian generations since. That constitutes an overwhelming mass of authority. But authority, though claiming reverence, cannot preclude inquiry, and the traditions of ages are subject to review. The question of the

origination of the Jews' religion, and therefore (in some sense) of our own, has been raised in a manner which compels attention, and is now before the general court of Christian opinion, where results are not reached abruptly, as by conciliar or Papal decrees, but by the longer process in which conviction is matured. I say the court of *Christian* opinion, where the supreme question is held as settled; not in quarters where the supernatural as such is ruled out of court. The Church is founded on Incarnation and Resurrection; there is therefore no such exclusion at the door. Preparatory interventions and preliminary revelations have there to be considered in relation to the final and stupendous intervention, which revealed the Father and the Son and effected the redemption of the world.

From the present as from past controversies we may expect increase of knowledge and enlargement of thought. Such expenditure of labour, ingenuity, and expert scholarship, must leave results of value in respect of the documents so thrashed out and winnowed. The cloud which has been raised from them of inferences and hypotheses which efface or reverse the history is another matter. Later generations will probably see the most of it as "the chaff which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth." Let the word of anticipation be pardoned. Old experience is inclined to the prophetic strain. But the present purpose is not to predict the issue, nor yet to argue the case; but to claim a thoughtful hearing for an illustrious witness, and to assert the importance of his testimony in the scheme of Scripture. It is a testimony which most deliberately and explicitly adopts the Jewish Scriptures as the heritage of the Christian Church, and more particularly endorses the records of the Patriarchs and the Exodus and the forty years in the wilderness, affirming the origination of the religion of Israel in interventions and communications of God. It is a testimony borne at the decisive moment of separation, when Judaism condemns the faith in Christ as blasphemy, and the Church disperses on its mission to the world. Finally, the report of the speech stands in the heart of the New Testament, a central and monumental testimony on its own subject. Behind it are the Gospels, with their frequent references, made by the Lord Himself, to Abraham, to Moses, to the Law and the Prophets, and the persons and things of the past. Beyond it are the teachings of the Spirit in the Apostolic writings, referring ever to these same persons and things, as appointed sources of holy instruction and revealing exhibitions of truth.

We may safely say that St. Stephen's speech made the first Christian martyrdom to be also the greatest, in respect of the extent of its significance and in its bearing on that whole course

of revelation, which had now culminated in "the coming of the Just One," of whom the judges present had been the betrayers and murderers. But that was not the end of the story. It was time to bring the great argument to a head, to speak of Resurrection and Ascension, and to testify that God has made that same Jesus whom they have crucified both Lord and Christ. But the speaker's words are arrested. There is momentary silence. His eyes, entranced, are gazing upwards. There is a cry of recognition, adoration, and joy: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God." The argument is finished for him. The testimony is supplied.

T. D. BERNARD.

ART. II.—LEO XIII.

TWENTY-FIVE years have gone by since Cardinal Pecci was elected to the vacant chair of Pius IX. He had been for two years Camerlengo of the Roman Church, and that office, by unbroken precedent, was thought to exclude its holder from the keys and triple crown. Indeed, it was believed that Pius had given the office to Cardinal Pecci, in order to exclude him. He was elected, however, after a Conclave of two days, and against only one serious competitor. Cardinal Bilio was young; he withdrew in favour of a much older man, saying that his chance would come again, and in a few months he was dead. Gioacchino Pecci was sixty-eight at his election, and gave out that he was in feeble health. The Cardinals were said to have calculated upon a reign of ten or a dozen years, which might enable them to judge, and if necessary to revise, the policy of the Holy See towards united Italy and the disconcerting posture of affairs in Rome. Leo XIII. was intended to be a transitional Pope. Instead of answering to this expectation, he frustrated it signally by living on till he was ninety-three, and by reigning for a quarter of a century. He enjoyed the longest reign, with one exception, which is recorded in the authentic history of the Popes. It is too early, no doubt, to judge fully or finally of this exceptional pontificate. We cannot remove ourselves far enough from Leo XIII. to see him in his true perspective and proportion. We cannot decide whether he will or will not rank among the greatest Pontiffs; but we may examine his completed reign, and estimate his character as it appears to us, and see what his influence has been upon contemporary politics. We may recall the position of the Roman Court at