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# THE SPIRIT IN THE WORD

BY

DAVID M. McINTYRE

AUTHOR OF

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TO  
J. C. M.

## PREFACE



FOR the space of at least a generation, students of the Bible have been familiar with the significant voices of criticism. No true lover of the Word will knowingly disregard the least consideration (from whatever quarter it may be urged) which seems to affect the character or authority of the Scriptures. Each ascertained fact must be allowed its place in any scheme of reconstruction that may be proposed. God can be served only by truth. But one is startled to find that for reasons which are by no means beyond controversy, and are in many cases mere working hypotheses, even earnest Christian men are willing to admit the depotentiation of the written Word of God. Ought not an old and tried friend like the Bible to be trusted a little more simply and generously than it has been by many of us? Ought we not to bring to the consideration of its difficult passages a little more love and a little more patience? It is indeed strange that any one should think that recognition of the human workmanship of the books of Scripture must necessarily lead to the impoverishment of the divine revelation. Is there not in such

a suggestion something of the medieval heresy which sundered man from God? God is not severed from us by distance: *In Him we live and move and have our being.* And if the true humanity of the Redeemer did not impinge upon His Divine Sonship, why should the humanness of this Book of books be thought to extinguish the breath of God that is in it? This Book is human as the voice of men, divine as the word of God.

At first view the saying of a great Church leader has a certain plausibility: "As I want Science to be absolutely free from any control of Faith, so I want Criticism to be free from any entanglement with questions concerning the contents of the Christian Revelation." But such an attitude is possible only to one to whom the Christian verities are a matter of minor importance. He who believes in Christ with heart and soul, however willing he may be that others should exercise their full freedom, cannot divest himself of his indebtedness to Jesus Christ. Every opinion which presents itself to such a one must be brought for judgment before the tribunal of Christ. To Him, not to members of any lettered society or priestly caste, belongs the key of knowledge. He opens, and no man shuts: He shuts, and no man opens.

It appears to me that a general view of Scripture which is tending to a lowered estimate of that Book which brings life and healing to the nations is spreading widely through the Churches. If this should indeed be so, and if it is to continue, nothing can avert the decay of religion and of good conduct.

In writing this book I have made more or less use of a number of articles contributed to various journals, in particular, to *The Life of Faith*. I have refrained from cumbering these pages with literary references. But I owe much to many writers. To Bishop Westcott and to my honoured teacher, the late Dr. A. B. Davidson, I am especially indebted.

The quotations from Scripture are, with scarcely an exception, according to the Revised Version.

D. M. M.

GLASGOW, *October* 1908.



# CONTENTS



	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	I
II. BIBLICAL CRITICISM : ITS PLACE AND SCOPE	11
III. INSPIRATION . . . . .	27
IV. THE MEDIA OF INSPIRATION . . . . .	39
V. THE INSPIRATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	51
VI. PROPHECY . . . . .	63
VII. THE PROPHETIC AFFLATUS . . . . .	77
VIII. THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE . . . . .	89
IX. THE INSPIRATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT . . . . .	109
X. THE SELF-WITNESS OF THE SCRIPTURES . . . . .	123
XI. THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT . . . . .	145
XII. THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST . . . . .	159
XIII. OUR LORD'S RELATION TO THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT . . . . .	169
XIV. OUR LORD'S WITNESS TO THE OLD TESTAMENT . . . . .	187
XV. THE ANSWER OF THE SOUL TO CHRIST . . . . .	203
XVI. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE BIBLE . . . . .	217
XVII. THE LIVING WORD . . . . .	227
XVIII. THE FIRST WORD AND THE LAST . . . . .	239

Lines written on the fly-leaf of a copy of  
Christopher Barker's Bible, of date 1599

Isaiah xii. 3, xlix. 10.

Here is the spring where waters flowe  
To quench our heate of sinne.

Here is the tree where trueth doth growe  
To lead our liues therein.

Here is the judge that stints the strife  
When men's devices faile.

Here is the bread that feedes the life  
That death cannot assaile.

The tidings of salvation deare  
Come to our ears from hence.

The fortesse of our faith is here,  
And shielde of our defence.

\* \* \* \* \*

Reade not this book in any case,  
But with a single eye.

Reade not, but first desire God's grace,  
To vnderstand thereby.

Pray still with faith in this respect,  
To fructifie therein ;

That knowledge may bring this effect,  
To mortifie thy sinne.

Then happy thou in all thy life,  
Whatso to thee befallles ;

Yea, double happie shalt thou be,  
When God by death thee calles.

*“The Bible is not a book containing a revelation ; it is a revelation accepting the risks and limits of a book.”*

JOSEPH PARKER.

I

*Introduction*

*“The true sayings of the Holy Ghost.”*

CLEMENS ROMANUS.

*Introduction*

THE aim of this volume is practical, not controversial. But at the present time it is scarcely possible to write about the Bible, however directly, and not stir large questions. I have not been able to refrain altogether from the consideration of some of these matters of debate, but I have tried to subordinate to practical uses all that I have had occasion to say.

In an earlier volume I ventured to express the opinion that the critical view of the Old Testament which in this country was then, to all appearance, in almost undisturbed reputation, had begun to fall under its own weight.<sup>1</sup> Fresh combinations, rendered necessary by the continual emergence of new facts, were beginning, even at that date, to compel a re-statement of opinions which a too hasty judgment had labelled "ascertained results of criticism." The elucidation of the synoptic problem which is now generally received, less brilliant perhaps than the "historical" re-arrangement of the Pentateuch, has been more carefully tested and more deliberately expressed; yet even with regard to it, there are signs of displacement.

<sup>1</sup> *The Divine Authority of the Scriptures of the Old Testament*, p. 40.

It would, however, be a grave mistake to conclude that the reversal of critical opinions which have gone far to discredit the plenary inspiration of Scripture would leave us free to return at once to the settled ground of faith on which our fathers stood. Two things render such a course impossible. For, first, the minds of men have been shaken, and even Christian people incline to believe that the Bible possesses a more limited authority than they once supposed. From this new standpoint one cannot recede by a mere act of will. Abandoned faith can be won back only at a price. And in the second place, concurrently with the general acceptance of "critical" views of Scripture, there is a still wider movement of the time-spirit, which makes naturalism appear most reasonable, and divine intervention in human affairs almost unthinkable.

The discussion of current theories of biblical criticism does not come within the scope of this work; but questions relating to the inspiration and authority of Holy Scripture will engage our attention. It may seem desirable, therefore, that I should at once state my belief regarding these points.

I believe that the Spirit of God impressed the human authors of the Bible in such wise and measure that, in its parts and in its completeness, it is the very revelation and witness of God. I am unwilling to make use of the expression "verbal inspiration," for that phrase seems to define the undefinable correlation of the Divine Spirit with the human intelligence. Nor do I choose to employ the term "inerrancy," as that can apply only to the original documents, concerning

which we are in fact altogether uninformed. And I protest against the term "mechanical," which is a mere fencer's flourish, signifying nothing. Is there anywhere one who believes that the Spirit of inspiration acted with automatic precision on unresponsive minds?

Not to delay on this matter, I subscribe to the sentence of the late Dr. George Smeaton: "The Scripture is the Word of God, inspired throughout by the Spirit of God in every part, and given in human forms of expression."<sup>1</sup>

Few things are more desirable at the present moment than a clearing of the doctrine of sufficient inspiration from misunderstanding and aspersion. Is it too much to hope that one of our biblical scholars may ere long give us this? Probably we ought, in accordance with the temper of the time, to begin afresh by re-affirming the full content of our experience of the truth and preciousness of the written Word of God, and of that Living Word whom the Sacred Record reveals.<sup>2</sup> We may fairly argue from the influence of the revelation to its divine origination.

<sup>1</sup> *The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit*, second edition, p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> Professor Sandeman, a distinguished English mathematician, in a book which he called *Pelicotetics*, elaborated a careful argument to show that two and two do, inevitably and invariably, make four. A demonstration of this familiar fact would no doubt excite the interest of all who are versed in pure mathematics, but the great mercantile world is content with the affirmations which experience yields, and which are set forth in order in arithmetical tables. On such experimental findings the largest interests are launched with no sense of insecurity. Similarly, experience is the readiest proof of the verity and authority of Holy Scripture. Our most satisfying assurance of its infinite worth lies not in logic, but in life. We believe the Bible to be divine, not so much because we have argued the matter out to that conclusion, as because it comes to us in the very power of God.



The river which pours its full stream through the wilderness of this world, and makes the desert glad, can have no lower source than the hills of God. Such a method of inquiry has a higher sanction than Verulam could confer: "Each tree," said the Master, "is known by its own fruit."

In writing this book I have been at pains to underline certain considerations which are more or less obvious, but which are of eternal validity. In particular, I have tried to show that the fullest insistence on the veritable humanness of the various writings, which compose the body of Scripture, does in no degree detract from the divine authority of the written Word.

That divine utterance vibrates through human tones. Side by side, in the one volume, we have the copious and impassioned oratory of Isaiah, the quickening recitative of Micah the Morasthite, the wistful earnestness of the prophet of tears, the strenuous exhortations of the Preacher, the lyric strains of the Psalter, the tumultuous urgency of the apostle to the Gentiles, and the lucid depth of the disciple whom Jesus loved. The humanity of the sacred writers is not diminished, their idiosyncrasies are not destroyed, their individuality is stretched on no bed of Procrustes. The message conveyed is the divine word, its organ of utterance lips of flesh. The instruments of the revelation spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, but those who were so moved were men of like nature with us.

Out from the heart of nature rolled  
The burdens of the Bible old.

The litanies of nations came,  
Like the volcano's tongue of flame,  
Up from the burning core below—  
The canticles of love and woe. . . .  
The word unto the prophets spoken  
Was writ on tables yet unbroken. . . .  
Still floats upon the morning wind,  
Still whispers to the willing mind.  
One accent of the Holy Ghost  
The heedless world hath never lost.

The sacred writers relate that the hand of the Lord was upon them, the breath of the Lord was in their nostrils, the voice of the Lord was in their ears, the Spirit of the Lord led them forth into new occasions and unwonted circumstances, the burden of the Lord pressed upon their aching hearts, the name of the Lord filled their being, the vision of the Lord confounded their amazed understandings—and so on through a score of formulas descriptive of the interpenetration of the human with the divine. It is evident, therefore, that he who would understand the miracle of inspiration must himself be spiritual. His nature—like that of the seers and revealers of the Sacred Word—must be open God-ward, responsive to every breath that blows from the fair land of Immanuel. “If you would be a good divine,” said Samuel Rutherford, “I counsel you to sanctification.” That which teaches is the anointing, and this charism is given by God to all who obey Him. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. The Holy Spirit is the guarantor of the Holy Word.

If “a good book is the life-blood of a master spirit,” the Bible may be described as the expression of the mind and heart of God. And if we desire to know

Him and be filled with His Spirit, it is necessary to familiarise ourselves with the Word that reveals Him. In the days of His flesh our Lord had occasion more than once to rebuke the Pharisees for their ignorance of Scripture. "Have ye not read?" He asked, in tones of rebuke; and again He said, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God." And is it not true that many Christian people are ill-instructed in Bible truth and are weak in spirit because the Word of Christ does not dwell in them richly?

Whatever the reason, we seem to find it easier to interest ourselves in almost any book other than the Bible. We prefer religious journals, expositions, commentaries, sermons even, to the pure Word of God. One reason of this preference is, no doubt, to be found in the fact that a resolute mental and spiritual effort is involved in reading the Scriptures. Bible study is an athletic exercise. It may be compared to mountain-climbing; the ascent is laborious and long, but on the uplands the air is free and sweet and clean, and from the summit one beholds the land of far distances. There is no royal road to an adequate knowledge of Scripture; the student of the written Word must gird up the loins of his mind, and exercise himself unto godliness.

As we read, we ought to remember that the book before us, though written by holy men of old, was given by the inspiration of the Almighty. The book, as a whole and in every fragment, is a message from God. It comes to us with as real an intention as if it came with the direction of our name upon it, fresh

from heaven. An English mystic two centuries ago thought that he heard a celestial voice salute him by name, and say, "I have a message from God unto thee." The message of Scripture to the devout reader is not less real than if it had come thus to him, alone of all the world, clear out from the solitude of God.<sup>1</sup>

We ought to read the Word prayerfully. If there should be in what we read to-day a precept, let us embrace it; if a promise, let us claim it; if an example, let us emulate it; if a warning, let us fear before it. And always let us lift up our hearts to God, saying, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." One who has prayed the Bible through, turning every word of God into supplication, is far advanced in holiness, and is able to understand something of that which is wrapped up in the stupendous phrase, "the fulness of God."

If we read with fresh application, the Bible will always display itself in new significance. John Owen says, with one of his sudden flashes of insight, "A commandment that is always practised is always new, as John speaks of that of love." There is nothing which will so rehabilitate an outworn Bible as a renewal of biblical practice. When the Bible becomes unin-

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Maeterlinck tells us of certain devotees who had been informed that in a temple in a distant land the voice of God was heard unceasingly. They set out on the long journey, and at length arrived at their purposed destination. With an intensity which in time gave place to weariness, they waited. "We heard," said they, "that God was wont to speak to men at this place; we have come from far to hear His voice, but the silence is unbroken." But, even while they were confessing their disappointment, the temple *within* resounded with the utterances of Deity.

teresting, go down deeper into its meaning, yield a more unquestioning obedience to its authority, accept with greater simplicity of spirit its revelation of the unseen God, and the trenches which were dry and gaping with thirst will be filled with a living and laughing flood. The true way to realise the worth of the Bible is to receive what it offers, and to perform what it enjoins.

The Bible is given to us as knowledge. Faith and obedience turn it into power. The navigator in the chart-room of an ocean steamer studies the course as it is outlined under his hand. Point by point he transfers it from the chart to the steering-gear; and the crossed lines of black ink become living things, cutting a path in the trough of the sea from continent to continent.

John Duncan, of Edinburgh, in conversation with César Malan, who was at that moment urging him to receive the Son of God, quoted a text. "See," said the zealous evangelist, "you have the Word of God in your mouth." Dr. Duncan, afterwards, in narrating the events of that day, added, "It went through me like electricity." His scepticism fell from him as a withered leaf falls from the branch under the impulse of the springing life. He had become a new creature in Christ Jesus; old things had passed away; all things were made new. Knowledge had been changed into power.

II

*Biblical Criticism: Its Place and Scope*

*“There may be new aspects of the truth that press for recognition ; there may be need for some restatement of that which cannot change or fail. New thoughts which are strange to us now may prove, indeed, the clues to secrets we have never read. And we may be able to wait, please God, with the frankness and the patience of true insight, if all along we feel, in the certainty of personal experience, that the Holy Scriptures are making us, through God’s grace, wiser than we were ; and if in them we are learning to discern the forecast glory of the life by which we live.”*

BISHOP PAGET.

## II

### *Biblical Criticism: Its Place and Scope*

A QUAIN old print in the Calvinium, Geneva, symbolises the controversy stirred by the Reformation dogma of the sufficiency of the written Word of God. The Scriptures are placed in one dish of a huge pair of scales. A cluster of prelates and monks, aided by Satan, are endeavouring to demonstrate the superior weight of tradition by loading the other side of the balance with decretals and bulls, by pulling the arm down with cords, and even by standing in the basin. Beza and half a dozen other Reformers, grouped at a little distance, are looking on with perfect equanimity, their hands folded within their gowns; while the Bible rests immovably on the floor.

The calmness of the Reformers as they watch the fruitless efforts of their opponents suggests the mental attitude which the sons of God should always maintain, even when the eternal verities are enduring assault. Faith comes to the consciousness of her inviolate strength in days of ardour and achievement—

She reels not in the storm of warring words:  
She brightens at the clash of Yes and No.



Perturbation does not attach itself to "full faith," but to the "lurking doubt."

Once more the Bible has been placed in the scales, and we know that this has been ordered in the good providence of God. Perhaps we had grown indolent in our acceptance of those things which are most surely believed among us; perhaps we clung too tenaciously to our formulas; perhaps God is about to shed light from His Word beyond that which we were prepared to receive; perhaps the authority of Scripture is to be vindicated as it has never been vindicated yet. But in any case we do not lament over the present "critical" activity. We are in God's world, and the government is on His shoulder. "We live under Libra," wrote Thomas Adams, the Puritan; "we fear not Taurus, the Bull." Libra marks the turn of the year, and betokens criticism, the balance of opposites, adjustment, settlement. Our days, more truly even than those of the seventeenth century, are days of libration. Men everywhere are waking out of dogmatic certainty, and are weighing in scales the foundations and the elements. And it is well. For at such seasons the winds of God blow sweet and clear from the everlasting hills. But we must carefully distinguish between the rights of criticism and the validity of a particular theory.

Criticism is a necessary energy of the mind; it operates in every region of thought; and wisdom is justified of all her children. The revelation committed to us is a revelation in history, and biblical criticism has been defined by one of its greatest masters as

“the effort of exegesis to be historical.” Clearly, then, criticism has its just rights, even with regard to Holy Scripture. But those theories which are in these days associated with the literary analysis of the Hexateuch, and the solution of the synoptic problem, are not thereby justified. And if we should say that they do not appear to us to be securely founded; that we judge that they are too intricate to be true; and that we fear lest they should lead to depreciation of the Word of God, we neither deny the competence of criticism nor wish to restrict its freedom. Our one concern is that the treatment accorded to the Book which we supremely love should be just and equal.

It has been said, with constant iteration, that those considerations which engage the attention of biblical critics belong to pure scholarship, and ought to be left in that high region. We are told that competent inquirers are in very general agreement; that the questions in debate are mere matters of circumstance; that the Christian verities are wholly unaffected by any of the conclusions of criticism; and generally, that it is a mistake to bring such delicate adjustments as criticism is conversant with into the wrangling of the market-place.

It would not be correct to say that the school of criticism which has recently prevailed holds a monopoly of learning, or that it has drawn into agreement with itself that necessarily select body of men who are fitted to deal with the intricate questions involved. For, while there are on both sides men of splendid equipment and laborious scholarship, it would, I think,

be fair to say that the honours of controversy in recent years rest with those who attribute a very high degree and quality of inspiration to the Scriptures.

The term "scholarship" is often used in a way which is apt to mislead the unwary. A Hebrew grammarian is not commonly an expert in Assyriology; an Assyriologist may have had only a meagre training in literature; a man of letters may not be a student of history; a historian may not be an experienced Christian. But each of these is an expert in his own province, and there are many biblical problems which demand for their elucidation the concentrated wisdom of men who toil in widely separated fields of knowledge. Grammarians, historians, saints have all some contribution to offer to the solution of great biblical questions.

Let it be remembered also that special knowledge is not always controlled by practical wisdom. No judge will find upon expert evidence until it has been sifted. The specialist must be cross-examined as carefully as the lay witness. For, while the facts certified may be the facts of God, the inferences deduced from them are the inferences of men. And it is conceivable that an expert who has enthusiastically committed himself to a theory may be less able to estimate the cool value of considerations which affect it, on the one side or on the other, than one who possesses immeasurably less learning, but has a greater detachment from the theory which is, so to speak, on its trial. Moreover, the facts alleged are not always the facts of God. It is important to remember this,

for nothing is so hard to secure as literal accuracy ; every day furnishes us with fresh illustrations of the fallibility of experts.

We have indicated that the region which belongs to expert evidence (in the narrow use of the term) does not by any means cover the whole ground in this controversy. When the Pharisees asked, "Hath any of the rulers believed on Him?" they spoke as experts, but they pressed the privilege of their special knowledge beyond the limit within which it might fairly claim consideration. Biblical criticism amasses its materials by research ; afterwards it works upon those materials as a science of comparison. It begins by going down into deep shafts. With much labour it separates from the matrix in which they inhere the facts that are relative to its purpose. It brings these facts into the light of day ; it determines, distributes, denominates, describes them. And then it makes its appeal to the broad intelligence of understanding men. The facts which are the material of the Higher Criticism of the Sacred Scriptures lie before us. We are free to weigh them, and to examine their implications. And if it should appear to us that the evidence points to certain results, we ought not to be deterred from accepting an apparently legitimate conclusion by an over-anxious deference to "expert" opinion.

It is true that our deepest concern is not with questions of authorship and date. But these become of the first importance when they affect the truthfulness of the sacred records. If it could be shown that some

of the judgments of Old Testament critics respecting the received dates and reputed authors of the inspired writings were justified, we should not be greatly concerned, provided that the deliberate statements contained in the books were received as veracious. But this is just where the current historical criticism of the Old Testament disappoints us, and it is its failure here which creates in us the deepest distrust of its assumptions. At this point we declare our hostility without reserve; the criticism which finds itself constrained to qualify the simple intention and frank directness of that Book which has dispelled the moral darkness of the world is self-condemned.<sup>1</sup>

It is distressing to be told that the author of the Book of Daniel, despairing of a hearing if he wrote in his own name, wrote fiction as history, and history as prophecy, and that, nevertheless, the moral value of the book is unimpaired. It is hardly less painful to be assured that the religious value of the Book of Exodus is unaffected, even though we believe that the Tabernacle of Witness existed only in the imagination of some devout scribes; that the manifestation of Jehovah at Sinai was a mere figment, devised in order that a factitious authority might be lent to the precepts and sanctions of the law; that the marvellous and affecting interpositions of God in the

<sup>1</sup> Referring to this matter, the late Principal Cairns says with as much good sense as good feeling: "Surely the time will come in all lands when some sort of elementary feeling for the sacred and the great will be so diffused as to nip such absurdities in the bud, and serve as a foundation for the positive Scripture criticism and exposition to build upon."—*Life and Letters*, p. 432.

wilderness of the wanderings had possibly some basis in fact, but, as we have received the account of them, are quite unhistorical.

We are all familiar with this sort of thing, and one can only wonder at the lack of perception which attempts to explain such incongruities by a mere allusion to Oriental usage, or to the literary fashion of the times. If the Bible is not a book of the strictest and sacredest honour, it is not in any real sense the Word of God. To say this is not to incur the censure due to those who judge beforehand "by what methods and in what proportion it were to be expected that this supernatural light and instruction would be afforded us";<sup>1</sup> it merely repeats the evident proposition that the effect cannot transcend its cause. It is not to deny the possible value of allegory or drama as a vehicle of revelation; it is to re-affirm the old confession that "no lie is of the truth."

Nor is this manner of criticism restricted to the Old Testament. There are New Testament scholars who admit that the Gospels are in the main reliable, but affirm that the relation of the facts of the life of Christ by the evangelists has been "coloured," "affected," "idealised," by the faith of the Church; that, as years passed, a tendency to modify the apostolic tradition of our Lord's sayings and doings, to minimise the human element in His Person and to exaggerate the divine, became more pronounced; that various incidents recorded by the evangelists are to be regarded as the creation of the Church's reflective consciousness and

<sup>1</sup> Butler, *Analogy*, part ii. chap. 3.

the product of her adoring love ; that, in a word, we hear vibrating through the gospel story "the echo of the years that followed Christ's death," mingling with and sometimes silencing "the very voice of Jesus."<sup>1</sup> If such averments of criticism are to be accepted as even provisionally true, is it conceivable that the repose and assurance of our life in Christ should not be affected thereby? For, in the first place, we should not in that case be able to make our way back with any degree of well-grounded confidence to the very Jesus of Nazareth ; and secondly, we should have to believe that the witnessing Spirit of holiness added the seal of His testimony to statements which were actually untruthful. Nor should it be thought a sufficient reply to this if a smiling reference be made to "the unconscious artists of the imaginative East." It is not sufficient. History "idealised" has ceased to be history ; truth "modified" is no longer true. If we proceed upon such data as we have described, shall we not be forced to conclude that, in order to find the real Jesus, "we must learn to penetrate through the radiant haze with which He has been invested by tradition and faith" ?

<sup>1</sup> The late Dr. A. B. Bruce, for example, says of the author of the Third Gospel, that he "understates," "emphasises," "tones down," "touches up," "alters," "adapts," is full of "editorial solicitudes," "replaces realism by decorum," is guided by "what it is fitting to make Jesus do and say," "has it for one of his aims to soften harsh expressions," depicts "a Christ who is comparatively passionless," contemplates Jesus "through the brightly coloured medium of faith," flings "an aureole round His head," and, generally, "idealises" Him. If these things were so, it would be evident that the evangelist was not a man of crystalline and flawless integrity, evident also that his testimony is not the undimmed mirror of truth. See the *Expositor's Greek Testament*.

In a word, if the testimony of the evangelists is not to give way under the tremendous burden of the facts which they record, it must be absolutely truthful in intention. There is nothing in all the history of the world analogous to the story which they tell. One who was cradled in a manger, reared in a village, trained in a workshop, numbered with transgressors, claimed to be, and was, essential God. A solitary sufferer, dying in darkness, forsaken by the Father and derided by men, washed away in His own blood the stains of a world's guilt. A scarred and mangled form rose in triumph from the grave, and by that stupendous act multitudes beyond the power of man to number have been ransomed from the power of death. Facts like these are not credible on the testimony of men who do not hesitate on occasion to understate, overstate, or misstate the awful events which they record.

We are from time to time reminded that the adherents of the recently prevailing school of biblical criticism fall into two contrasted classes—the naturalistic and the believing—and that we are safe in the hands of believing scholars. We are not more safe in the hands of the one than of the other, unless these are more accurate in their relation of facts, more careful in their disposal of them. A good man may be a bad scientist, and bad science in the hands of a good man is still bad. Moreover, every theory which dissolves the integrity of Scripture tends—no matter who propounds it—to the disablement of faith. We say this plainly, for this is a point which must be pressed. It is not true that the labours of criticism are restricted



to questions of "this or that book's date." It is not true that its sphere is so narrowly limited that it leaves the foundation verities unassailed and unassailable. It is not true that only "panic and half-educated zeal" can conceive it possible that criticism should be able to impair "the certainty and real content of the believer's life in Christ." The Christian life is sustained by the doctrines of grace, and these repose upon a historical revelation. Nowhere, least of all in religion, can we afford to build castles in the air. The repeated assertion of certain critics that we can conveniently dispense with the historical shell in which the pearl of price is preserved, and may treat with indifference the Scripture narratives in which the dogma is enshrined, reminds one of nothing so much as of the delicious incoherence of the Scottish paraphrase—

Firm on the boundless void of space  
He poised the steady pole.

Not to speak of the dependence of the New Testament upon the Old, is it not plain to anyone who pauses to reflect, that the temporal relations of the Word made flesh, the recorded facts of the miraculous birth, the sinless life, the atoning death, the triumphant resurrection, and the glorious ascension, make it perfectly possible for historical criticism to strike at the heart of our faith?

It is, of course, open to anyone to try to reinforce our confidence with the assurance that we need be under no misapprehension, seeing that our faith is in the living Christ, and not in the Four Gospels; and

that, even though the record should be shown to be defective, the faith of the early Church is able to restore to us the Central Figure which criticism may seem to take away. We do not deny that our faith is in the living Christ, and that that faith works out an experience which becomes a ground of confidence. But it does not do so independently of the Gospel record. The sacred text first directed our steps to God. In it our soul discovered the Saviour, and became aware of our interest in Him. The life of grace has been maintained, strengthened, purified, by the written Word, and shall be until, relying on it, we are made more than conquerors in the "ghostly battle" that thunders through our dying hours.

Also, we venerate the faith of the early Church—it removed mountains, and accomplished a glorious martyrdom, but it cannot give us assurance where the divinely inspired Evangel is silent. It is an impressive evidence of the truth of the Christian religion, but it is so because it had a firm basis in history. When it is cut off from a perfectly reliable tradition, it hangs in air. If one should urge that the impression made by our Lord upon His contemporaries was a fact; that He is thus proved to be a historic reality, and can be given back to our faith and worship, even out of the wreck of the Four Gospels, it is necessary only to point out that the argument, perfectly valid as far as it goes, does not go far enough. It does not prove to us that the Jesus who lived in Nazareth and died on Calvary was the very Christ of faith. It fails to assure us of that which it chiefly concerns us

to know—the complete identity of the Son of Mary with the God-man of the Gospel history. On that point we must be absolutely clear. Did the Carpenter of Nazareth leave His exact imprint on the sacred page, or have the evangelists idealised Him? Did He utter the literal words, did He accomplish the veritable deeds which are recorded, or are we to find behind the fourfold record another Christ who is not another? If criticism falters in its confession here, no one can blame us if we refuse, *sans phrase*, to respond to its teaching. We remember our Lord's words in the Parable of the Good Shepherd—"When He hath put forth all His own, He goeth before them and the sheep follow Him: for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. . . . I know Mine own, and Mine own know Me."

The intellectual ground of our life in Christ is the inward witness of the Holy Spirit to the facts of revelation. Our faith reposes on the testimony of God, not of men; on the realities of history, not on the creations of a devout imagination. If our Saviour did not say, "Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations," we are not compensated for the loss of the mighty motive of the great Commission by the information conveyed in the name of historical criticism, that, some few decades after the Crucifixion, the early Church came to the conclusion that such an utterance would have been in perfect keeping with the august and peerless life of the Man of Sorrows. If Jesus did not stretch out hands of holy desire,

saying, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," it is of little interest to us that one of the early Christians, finding some beautiful words in the Wisdom of the Son of Sirach, wove them into that majestic invitation which has gone pleading down the ages, and succeeded in making the Church believe that in it they heard the gracious accents of the Christ of Galilee. The thrice-holy life of the Redeemer shines eternally apart, as far above the faith which it created as the heavens are above the earth.

Or is this what is meant—that we may unite ourselves by faith to the Eternal Christ, even though we have no sure knowledge of the Christ in history? Sir Harry Vane described certain religionists of his time as having positively no dogma, but as being able to lead holy lives; and he expressed his belief that there was in them the "seed of Christ." We have no wish to debate this question. An early Quaker hymn gives all the reply we need now—

By living to the Light within  
 From many a great and grievous sin  
 We may reformed be,  
 But living faith we cannot prove,  
 Nor rooted be in Jesus' love,  
 Nor wholly be made free.

It may be true, as certain of the Church fathers assure us, that the religion of Jesus is as old as the creation, and that the soul of man is natively Christian. But we have been accustomed to call a religion which is ignorant of the doctrines of grace, and independent of historical truth, "natural": we do

not term it "Christian." It is a very light thing to say on behalf of criticism that, after it has done its best or worst, it cannot abstract from us the religion of nature. What we have by grace received and cannot deny is the Christianity of the Manger and the Cross.

### III

## *Inspiration*

*“ All abstract analysis of Inspiration is impossible, as the divine element is already in combination with the human when we are first able to observe its presence. Our inquiry is thus limited strictly to the character of Inspiration. The real existence of such an influence is proved at once by common belief and personal experience. The nature of its operation transcends the power of our thought ; but it remains to examine the form which this divine teaching bears when presented to men.”*

BISHOP WESTCOTT.

### III

## *Inspiration*

WHEN we take into our hands the several books which we now bind in one volume, and call the Bible, we find that we "neither can nor dare throw off a strong and awful prepossession" in their favour.<sup>1</sup> The virtue of these writings has infused itself into our life, their influence is fashioning anew the world in which we dwell. And when we begin to examine for ourselves this collection of ancient documents, we find that it is marked by singular and admirable characteristics. There is nothing in literature with which we can compare it. It displays on every page the divine certification. And we have learned to call it the Word of God.

Yet it is a perfectly human book. Whatever that element may be which distinguishes it from all other compositions, the individuality of the saintly men of old, who revealed to us the heart of God, has not thereby been destroyed. They have diffused through all the world the knowledge of those things which their eyes beheld and their hands handled; they have transmitted to us the record of a lofty, but truly

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge, *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, i. 5.



human experience. They narrated history; they sang of mercy and of judgment; they heralded the future; they lifted up their lives to God; they suffered, laboured, died in faith. At times their thought took wing, and soared as with an eagle's flight toward the sun; at other times it trudged unflinchingly along the beaten track; again, it wandered in a pathless desert, finding no guidance but the stars of God. Many of those saints of the Most High stood clear on the skyline, discernible to all; others were discovered only by a voice, plaintive or pleading, which echoed among the hills. But they were all men of like nature with us; and the epic of destiny which they recounted in our hearing was, first of all, their own triumph or tragedy. They were "men of portent" (Zech. iii. 8); their individual experience epitomised the history of the world. Of all the literature of earth, this book has the widest reach; it sweeps the scale of life; it rehearses the sins and fears, the doubts and hopes, the aspirations and attainments of the children of men. And, precisely because it is the most human of books, it is the most divine.

That which distinguishes Holy Scripture from other writings is the presence in it of the Divine Breath; "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." From this text the Church, at an early date, drew the significant term, Inspiration.

Other terms and figures are used to describe the action of the Spirit upon the minds of the sacred

writers,<sup>1</sup> but this of inbreathing is the most illuminative.

This metaphor is employed in two other passages of the first importance: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7); "And when He said this, He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22). From these verses we learn that the teaching of Scripture relative to its own inspiration lies within the larger doctrine of the Spirit. The divine excitation which moved the human authors of the Bible to utter, and thereafter to commit to writing, that which the Lord had spoken, was a particular application of the plenary gift of the Spirit who, in Old Testament times, was granted to the prophets by anticipation (John vii. 39), and was conferred upon the Church without reversal by the ascended Lord.

The proof of this statement lies so closely to one's hand that a formal demonstration is unnecessary; but so much depends upon it that it may be well to

<sup>1</sup> "To describe the coming of this influence, they (the prophets) say that the Spirit was on them, that it rested on them, fell upon them, or laid violent hold upon them. To describe its effects, they say that they were filled with the Spirit, that it moved them, took them, took them up, brought them, spoke in them, went away from them, or passed them by, or such like. To describe the influence as coming from God, they say that God pours out His Spirit upon them, that He gives Him, or puts Him upon one, puts Him within one, fills one with Him, takes Him away from one, and so on. To express the power and sometimes even the force of the divine influence, they speak of the hand of the Lord being on them, of its falling upon them, and of its being strong over them."—A. B. Davidson, *Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 152.

present two or three Scripture passages by way of confirmation.

(*a*) The classical passage in the Old Testament predictive of the donation of the Spirit—the promise pleaded by the waiting company in the upper room in Jerusalem, the vindication offered by Simon Peter of the marvellous experience of the first Christian Pentecost—is couched in terms of the revelation granted to Israel.

“And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of My Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: yea, and on My servants and on My handmaidens in those days will I pour forth of My Spirit; and they shall prophesy” (Acts ii. 17, 18, R.V.).

The promise to the New Testament Church, to all believers, “and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call,” the evangelical promise of the Spirit of Life, is, in terms, the announcement of the advent in unhindered power of the Spirit of prophecy.

(*b*) Our Lord, seated at the first Communion Table, deliberately enclosed within the general intimation of the bestowal of the Spirit of Comfort a particular promise of teaching and illumination to those who should be chosen to write the Scriptures of the New Testament.

“But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you

all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you. . . . When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He shall guide you into all the truth: for He shall not speak from Himself, but what things soever He shall hear, these shall He speak: and He shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John xiv. 26, xvi. 13).

(c) The Apostle Paul, in his First Epistle to the Corinthians, enumerates the greater gifts of the one and the same Spirit, who divides to each one severally even as He will.

"To one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: to another faith in the same Spirit, and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues" (I Cor. xii. 8-10).

For a moment he breaks off in praise of Christian love; then, returning to his theme, he exhorts the Corinthians to "follow after love; yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy." Now, as "prophecy" is the Old Testament term—a term reappearing with the same connotation in the New Testament—for the product of inspiration (Joel ii. 28; Rev. xix. 10, etc.), the Apostle explicitly teaches in this place that the afflatus communicated to the sacred writers was a particular gift of that Spirit who distributes to each man severally as He will.

Before we attempt to discover from the Scriptures

themselves the nature or properties of this gift, we may in some measure clear our way by a hasty comparison of the customary action of the Spirit of God in the minds and hearts of the regenerate with that particular operation which we call "inspiration," and which was experienced in fulness only by those who were divinely selected to record the Word of God.

The divine method of self-disclosure has always been the ministration of "truth through personality." The truths which the sacred writers transmit to us grew to form in their own lives. The Spirit of inspiration witnessed with their spirits. In their love for God and yearning after Him; in their consciousness of sin and happy realisation of grace; in the strong consolation granted to them in the hour of sorrow; and in their instinctive reaching forth towards a blessed and holy immortality, God spoke to them. Then, out of their varied experiences, they spoke to us.

It is hardly necessary to add that this fact in no way diminishes the marvel of inspiration. Our conception of the supernatural is not single, but twofold. God is immanent, but He is also transcendent. Our fathers were apt to lay the weight of emphasis on the remoteness of God; we lay it on His presence. Such an alternation of accent is perhaps necessary in order that the truth may be held in equipoise; but we must never insist on the one relation so as to obscure the other. We ought not to consider "nature" and "the supernatural" as we regard the earth and the heavens

—apart, contrasted, and with infinite distances between. We should rather conceive of them as we think of the air and the ether—distinct, yet interfused. The luminiferous ether penetrates the atmosphere in every part, without disturbing or displacing it. That rarest of essences is viewless, impalpable, imponderable; nevertheless, it is along the channels which it provides that the great elemental forces—heat, light, actinism, electricity—pass to enrich us with their blessings. And yet, though it fills the atmosphere, it is not to be measured by it. Beyond the film of air which wraps our planet, the ether vibrates through measureless spaces. And the virtue which it communicates in its immanence is determined by its transcendence.

If one were to argue from general considerations, one might be disposed to say that a higher quality of inspiration was requisite to enable Isaiah to foretell the vicarious sufferings of the Servant of the Lord than to chronicle the birth of his own son, or to record the sickness of Hezekiah; or that Paul might remind Timothy of the cloak left at Troas, without inspirational aid, whereas that aid must have been given to him in its highest degree when he was dictating the doctrinal and eucharistical portions of the Epistle to the Ephesians. But the comparison indicated above does not suggest any waxing or waning of the divine illumination. We need a full Christ for the most prosaic hour, the most threadbare act of use and wont. Like Brother Lawrence, we require the entire potency of the divine presence to enable us to take up a straw from the ground "for

the love of God." A cup of cold water, given simply, almost without reflection, may have heaven in it. And the tides of the Spirit possibly ran as high in the passionless narratives of the Old Testament as in the Psalms, in the homely counsels of Simon Peter as in the glowing pages of the Apocalypse.

In the general experience of believers, we see that the interaction of the Holy Spirit with the spirit of man quickens rather than depresses individuality. We are most ourselves when we are filled with God. The gift of the Spirit is eternal life. Paul began to live—in the fullest sense of the term—only when he could say, "I, yet not I, but Christ." The indwelling of God strips conventionality from us, it unswathes our life, it invigorates our being. No one is so natural as a saint, no book has such an absence of seeming in it as the Bible. Never were the prophets of the Old Testament so true to themselves as when their hearts were filled with the vision of God. Never did the apostles display such simplicity of thought and feeling as when the rushing of a mighty wind swept them into the trackless mystery of the love of God.

It is related that Philip Melancthon once asked Luther how it was that God made known His will to the prophets. Luther replied: "They were very holy spiritual people, who seriously contemplated holy and divine things; therefore, God spake with them in their consciences, which the prophets held as sure and certain revelation."<sup>1</sup> This reply was certainly true in

<sup>1</sup> Luther's *Table Talk*, DXLVI.

substance. We are, of course, aware that God spoke by outward things, by words or signs; but these utterances and significations registered themselves in the human spirit, which is the earthly throne of the Divine Spirit. It was through the accordant witness of God with man that authority declared itself, and clothed with a mantle of power the preaching of apostles and prophets, the narrations of historians and evangelists, the speculations of the seekers after wisdom, and the travail of the saints. Authority is not without us: it is within. Nevertheless, authority is not of man, but of God.

Once more, if the faculty or quality of inspiration is a particular gift within that "promise of the Father" which is extended to all the children of faith, the assertion that the doctrine of plenary inspiration involves a "mechanical" view of Scripture may be at once dismissed. If it be true that "he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17); if the believer is able to say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20); if the Triune God can so possess our souls, inform our understandings, and direct our wills, that we may rightfully claim that "as He is, even so are we in this world" (1 John iv. 17), it is apparent that, without any violation of our personal life, arrest of personal activity, or derangement of personal characteristics, the Spirit of God *could* so impress the minds of prophets, psalmists, and evangelists that they should be able, in words of "infallible truth and divine authority," to communicate



to succeeding generations the revelation committed to them.

How far the Spirit of God actually secured the sacred writers from error is a question the answer to which must be sought in the self-witness of the Writings themselves, and in the covering testimony of the Master.

IV

*The Media of Inspiration*

*“For every fiery prophet in old times,  
And all the sacred madness of the bard,  
When God made music through them, could but speak  
His music by the framework and the chord.”*

*“The Idylls of the King.”*

## IV

### *The Media of Inspiration*

INSPIRATION is communicated through words. Words are the signature of thought, and thought is the expression of life. The media of inspiration, therefore, are words, thoughts, experience, and the human spirit.

The father of Samuel Taylor Coleridge used to speak with reverence of Hebrew as "the immediate language of the Holy Ghost." It was not so originally, but when the divine revelation came to it special terms were selected by the Spirit of God and lifted up from a common to a sacred use. "Holiness" seems originally to have denoted "approach towards." Out of this conception of physical movement the ideas of consecration and sanctity developed. The furtive gleam of fire within a cloud suggested a descriptive term for the "glory" of God. "Peace," the conventional greeting of wayfarers in the desert, became the pledge of reconciliation with the Father. The "redemption" of the debtor, the "salvation" of the oppressed, the "ransom" of the slave by the kinsman-redeemer, who, as the nearest of kin, possessed the right of succour, were words which grew to fulness of meaning until they were written red in the blood of

Christ. The aerial expanse suggested "heaven," and the polluted valley of the Son of Hinnom represented "hell." A transaction of petty commerce in the market-place conveyed its descriptive term to the covenant of grace. And the breath of the summer wind came to signify the viewless Spirit of God.

Some of the greatest words of the Bible are words of the cradle and the hearth. When a philosopher attempts to define God he frames his speech in negations. A theologian prefers to restrict himself to scholastic terms. Even a poet will discourse of "Infinite Ideality, Immeasurable Reality, Infinite Personality."<sup>1</sup> But when Jesus addressed the Divine Being He chose a word among the first that a child's weak lips can utter, "Abba," Father!

"Faith" is the term which characterises the mightiest spiritual energy known to men. And the Hebrew word for faith appears to be derived from the first response of the babe to its mother's endearments, and to indicate the attitude of the helpless little one clasped in its mother's arms and clinging to its mother's bosom. By the aid of such words, among the earliest that "infants' lips can try," God has conveyed a large part of His message to men.

The teaching of Christ is remarkable for its simplicity. And He seems never to have complained of the inadequacy of words. The sacred writers, at times, throw out their words at an object seen dimly and afar off, and, despairing of their efforts to sound the depths of God, confess that there are things which it is not

<sup>1</sup> Tennyson, *De Profundis*.

lawful for man to utter, things that are unspeakable, undecipherable, which pass understanding and knowledge. But Christ does not throw out His words at an object. His gaze rests on the eternal realities, and in the simple things of life He finds the nearest counterpart to the manifestation of grace. The only time when He even seemed to hint that His disclosure of truth had been hindered by the limitation of human speech was in His farewell discourse to His disciples: "These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs" (marg. "parables"). The Greek philosophers were accustomed to say that, seen through "the variegated veils of distinction," heavenly truths mirror themselves in earthly correspondences.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, our Lord appears to teach us that the absolute verity of things is beyond our present reach, but that earthly correspondences adequately serve to set forth the fulness of the divine revelation.

I have said that words are the signature of thought. In employing human speech inspiration has to express itself through conceptions which are current among men. Sometimes the inspiring Spirit breaks the

<sup>1</sup> Milton has the teaching of these philosophers in mind when he makes Raphael say—

How best unfold  
The secrets of another world, perhaps  
Not lawful to reveal? Yet for thy good  
This is dispensed; and what surmounts the reach  
Of human sense, I shall delineate so,  
By likening spiritual to corporeal forms,  
As may express them best; *though what if earth  
Be but the shadow of heaven, and things therein  
Each to other like, more than on earth is thought?*

mould and creates new forms of thought, as in the New Testament characterisation of love. Sometimes He purifies the conception, separating it to holy uses, as in the transformation of meaning wrought upon the Greek word for "lowliness." Sometimes He frankly accepts an imperfect thought, impressing upon it the seal of truth, as in the acceptance of the Divine Wisdom as a witness to the Person of Christ.

When we turn to larger ideas a quite congruous method seems to have place in the Spirit's working. The legislative enactments of Jehovah were made to frame themselves within the system of tribal law which the children of Israel brought with them out of Egypt. The revelation of God as the Creator and Upholder of the frame of nature could be expressed only in terms of the physics and astronomy of the day. The conception of Deity as utter purity, light unshadowed and undimmed, had to burn its way through the obscurations with which sin had darkened the human mind. The design of the Spirit, from the first word of Scripture to the perfect manifestation of the Son, seems to have been to express His meaning with such clearness that there should be no real occasion for misunderstanding, yet with the least possible disturbance of current modes of thought.

These considerations make it apparent that the revelation conveyed to us by the Spirit is a revelation by means of life.

Ruskin reminds us of "the broken mirror" into which we look, the mirror set in the depths of the soul with the reflecting surface turned upwards.

Across its darkened and broken face the shadows of eternal things pass, suggestive of our earthly experience, yet "formless with infinity." "Here," he says, "is a short piece of precious word revelation, for example, 'God is love.' Love! yes. But what is *that*? The revelation does not tell you that, I think. Look into the mirror, and you will see. Out of your own heart you may know what love is. In no other possible way—by no other help or sign. All the words and sounds ever uttered, all the revelations of cloud, or flame, or crystal are utterly powerless. They cannot tell you, in the smallest point, what love means. Only the broken mirror can."

"God is love." Therefore He may be compared to a father—"Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him"; or to a mother—"As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted"; or to one betrothed—"As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee."

We have long been agreed that the doctrine of inspiration is not to be evolved from our conception of what is due by the Deity to Himself; it must be deduced from the facts of revelation. We might suppose, for example, that God, being infinitely perfect, would utter His word in an infinitely perfect manner. But the Bible is a homely book, rude often in speech, defective at times in literary qualities, couched not infrequently in terms of a narrow experience. So we are forced to lay aside our first conceptions, and devote ourselves to the comparatively humble labour



of amassing and ordering those facts of experience which constitute the history of revelation.

In the Middle Ages many of the monks spent their days in copying the Scriptures ; and as they transcribed they emblazoned the page. On the margin, or at the head of successive chapters or paragraphs, they wrought some pictured incident, drawn perhaps from their own experience, a history in symbol, a providence in imagery. If the humblest saint were to begin to illustrate the Scriptures with comment and explanation furnished by his own Christian life, what a wealth of recollection would arise in his heart ! As he set down on the glowing margin the record of his manifold deliverances, how the page would burn ! Many of these memorials would be repeated in varying forms—the commemoration of familiar experiences in new surroundings—and one at least would recur a thousand times, old yet ever new, daily growing to sweeter splendour as each fresh attainment or added grace shed new light upon it—the story of redemption by the blood of Christ.

Now, it was actually in this way that a very large part of the Bible was written at first. Each one of the sacred writers dipped his pen into his own heart, and from his own remembered experience recorded, for the edification of his fellows, the manifestation of grace.

Abraham resigned all prospects of earthly greatness in order that he might establish a society of God-fearing men and women. In the ardour of achievement and in the discouragement of apparent failure he foresaw the day of Christ ; far off, beyond the bound of the waste, he beheld the city of God.

Jacob tended the flock of his pasture in the cold of the winter night and under the heat of the desert sun. By reason of his carefulness for the sheep of his hand, sleep departed from his eyes. And the shepherd-heart became, as it were, an open book in which the heart of God was read: "The God which hath shepherded me all my life long unto this day . . . bless the lads." Isaiah went into the temple, to worship. The shame of sin had fallen upon his soul. He was "convicted for sanctification." Then, in answer to his cry of need, there flashed on his view the altar, with its cleansing fires and atoning blood: "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged." He saw, seated upon the eternal throne, Immanuel, the priest of an eternal sacrifice. Job, conscious of his rectitude, heard his integrity impeached. His name was cast out as evil, trodden down in the mire of the street. And then he saw the throne of unspotted justice set, and on the throne One like unto a son of man, a Vindicator, a Redeemer, come to avenge the cause of this broken man, who was, amid his misery, God's chosen one.

So one might journey down the pages of Holy Writ. But this last illustration reminds us that there is a still more intimate connection of the revelation with those to whom it was entrusted. In the measure of their faith, sufferings, and triumph these men of old stood "in the room of Christ." In anticipation, they were borne by the Spirit of prophecy into the very life of the Master.

On the mountains of Moriah, Abraham, lifting the

sacrificial knife to slay Isaac, was enabled to read the fathomless mystery of the shadow which fell upon the throne of the Eternal, the shadow of the cross. Hosea, by the agony of love betrayed, love which in dishonour pardoned all, and in forsakenness did not forsake, recognised more clearly than his fellows the tenderness and endurance of the love of God. The author of the twenty-second Psalm was driven by doubt and despair to the outmost borders of the land of forgetfulness. From the last extremity of human need he called upon God, the God of the covenant, and was delivered. The cry of desolation was changed into a song of victory and achievement, a proclamation to generations yet unborn that Jehovah "hath done *this*."<sup>1</sup> And so, the experience of an unnamed Hebrew saint becomes, in the vision of Calvary, the song of the Lamb. Zechariah was commanded to personate the shepherd of Jehovah's flock. As he lived through the varying experiences of Him who is the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of souls he was taught the mystery and miracle of atonement: "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." Paul, in his journeyings, tribulation, and travail, bore in his body the dying of the Lord Jesus, and filled up that which was lacking of the afflictions of Christ in his flesh. Thus he came to know, out from the pain and shame which shadowed his own life, something of the anguish which the dying

<sup>1</sup> It is probable that the mind of Christ was resting on this prophetic word when He uttered from the Cross the word of triumph, "It is finished."

Redeemer had endured.<sup>1</sup> John, writing of the sorrows of the Church, "wept much"; and when his own tears had been dried it was given him to write for the comfort of each persecuted Church and every afflicted soul: "God shall wipe away every tear from their eye; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away."

Thus in the frail reed of our humanity the sacred fire was hidden, till He came who was at once the Father's Sole-begotten and the lowly Son of Man. God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son.

And so the Word had breath, and wrought  
With human hands the creed of creeds.

<sup>1</sup> We are sometimes told that the doctrine of atonement does not appeal to the modern conscience. If that be so, is it not because the obligation of cross-bearing has been disregarded? The man who humbly bears his cross after Jesus will find no difficulty in accepting the truth of an atoning sacrifice.

v

*Inspiration of the Old Testament*

*“It is impossible to read the Old Testament with open eyes without seeing that we have there the record of the Divine plan and purpose worked out unbastingly, unrestingly, ‘in patient length of days.’ The revelation was gradual, progressive, manifold. God’s purpose was one and the same throughout ; His truth is one and unchanging. But the purpose must be wrought out step by step in successive ages, in many fashions ; the truth must be communicated fragment by fragment, in many parts, as men were able to receive it.”*

CANON KIRKPATRICK.

## V

### *Inspiration of the Old Testament*

THE author of the Epistle to the Hebrews informs us that "by divers portions and in divers manners" God spake to the fathers in the prophets. The modes of inspiration are various. The differences of the Spirit's operation depend, no doubt, on temperament, training, environment, but above all on the nature of the revelation entrusted to the several writers. Without attempting to enumerate minor distinctions which the careful reader may observe, we may distinguish in the Old Testament four chief forms of inspired utterance.

1. We have, first, the Histories. In these no special claim to inspiration is made. The annalists do not obtrude themselves. The books of the Chronicles, for example, are undoubtedly the work of a succession of priestly narrators. The authorship of Genesis is not disclosed. One can only guess who the writers of the Books of Joshua, Ezra, Nehemiah may have been. Judges, Samuel, and Kings, like Chronicles, seem to have been the work of many hands.

Although the sacred historians are denominated "prophets," the mere recital of facts does not

suggest the stimulus and enlightenment of the human mind in the same degree as do the creative utterances of those who have looked upon the face of God and have given ear to His words. But the power of the Divine Spirit may have been as truly present in the one as in the other. Inspiration is not to be measured solely by the impressiveness of its manifestation. The writer who seems to be scarcely aware that the afflatus which moves him is divine may be as powerfully under the control of the Spirit of God as one who thrills in every nerve to the touch of Deity.

The methods of the Old Testament historians appear to be identical with those of historians generally. The sacred annalists accumulate their materials by the labour of research. They quote freely from earlier writers; the books of the Wars of the Lord (Num. xxi. 14), of Jasher (Josh. x. 13), of the Chronicles of David (1 Chron. xxvii. 24), of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings xi. 41), of Nathan the seer, and of Gad the seer (1 Chron. xxix. 29), of Shemaiah the seer (2 Chron. xii. 15), of Ahijah the Shilonite (2 Chron. ix. 29), of Jehu the son of Hanani (2 Chron. xx. 34), of Iddo the seer (two volumes, if not three; 2 Chron. ix. 29, xii. 15, xiii. 22), are all laid under tribute; and additional facts are gleaned from the Sayings of the Seers (2 Chron. xxxiii. 19), from genealogical registers (2 Chron. xii. 15; Neh. vii. 5), and from ancient records cited without particularity (1 Chron. iv. 22).

The evidence of the inspiration of the historical



books of the Old Testament is to be sought rather in the view-point of the writers than in particular statements. The history of Israel was, throughout, a revelation of God. There were in it a divine election, divine deliverances, divine guidance, divine preservation, divine instruction, and, in all, a divine purpose. 'These things the sacred historians of Israel recognised and recorded. They did not merely narrate the events of history, they revealed the inner workings of God.

The first word of the Historical Writings (in the order of our Scriptures) is that lofty announcement of the being, wisdom, and power of God with which the Book of Genesis opens, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"; and in all the subsequent narration the sacred writers see heaven open above them. The true efficient is the fiat of God. Even in the dark days of the Judges Jehovah is seen, moving in resistless energy among the tribes. The clamour of the people for a king is condoned and overruled. The kingdom in Israel becomes a type of the rule of the long-promised Messiah. The only procedure in politics permitted to the kings of Judah and Israel is that which has been determined by the will of God. And the events of fear and calamity which come upon the people of the covenant are interpreted in the light of the divine favour and faithfulness. The Books of Esther, Daniel, and Ruth are links in a chain that stretches from the throne of the Eternal to the Cross of Calvary.

2. When one turns to consider the divine authority

of the Law given by Moses, an entirely different set of facts emerges. The inspiration of the great law-giver is persistently affirmed, and the command of God, that he should set down in writing the communications entrusted to him, is quite explicit.

What Moses was to Aaron—a source of authoritative instruction—that, in a way of pre-eminence, Jehovah was to Moses. The very terms which are used to describe the one relation are employed to indicate the other. Exodus iv. 15 is one of many passages which seem to suggest a relation of personal intercourse between the prophet and Jehovah. Moses saw the divine form (Ex. xxiv. 9, 10); he heard audible speech (Num. vii. 89); the congregation also heard that voice (Ex. xix. 3-9); and, in general, God spoke to Moses as a man may speak with his friend (Ex. xxxiii. 9-11). More than once we are assured that “there hath not arisen a prophet since in Israel, like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face” (Deut. xxxiv. 10). It was this feature of the divine communications granted to Moses that made him so perfect a type of the Messiah (Deut. xviii. 15, 18). The cardinal passage, however, is in the twelfth chapter of Numbers—

“And the Lord spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tent of meeting. And they three came out. And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, and stood at the door of the Tent, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And He said, Hear now My words: if there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make Myself known unto him in

a vision, I will speak with him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so; he is faithful in all Mine house: with him will I speak mouth to mouth, even manifestly, and not in dark speeches; and the form of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against My servant, against Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and He departed. And the cloud removed from over the Tent" (vers. 4-10).

Although much in this recital must always remain mysterious, one thing cannot be doubted: the Lord with whom Moses spoke in actual presence was the Jehovah - angel of the covenant (Ex. xxiii. 20), the pre-incarnate Saviour, who had already entered His creation, and was humbling Himself to become man. This is how the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews appears to read the passage, and indeed it can have no other meaning. The intercourse of Moses with the Redeemer was thus, in some respects, like that of the disciples who continued with Christ in His journeyings, ministries, and sorrows. The Mediator of the better covenant, as amidst His angelic legions He enthroned Himself on Sinai's burning summit (Heb. ii. 2; Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19), gave to the earthly mediator, type and promise of Him who was to come, the fiery law.

If this be so, and we desire to speak with due restraint, it is impossible to believe that the account of the giving of the law contained in Exodus can have originated in the pious artifice of priests and scribes, and yet that this book retains its character as Holy

Scripture. Is it an unwarranted use of language if we apply to such a suggestion that terrible sentence of Bacon's in which he speaks of offering "to the Author of truth the unclean sacrifice of a lie" ?<sup>1</sup>

3. When we come to the Wisdom Literature and to the Devotional Books, we find that inspiration possesses characters different from those which we have described. These books give us the response of the soul to the revelation conveyed in the History of Israel, in the Law, and by the Prophets. The authors of these writings were, first of all, men of faith. In their lives the raw material of the revelation was woven into the finished product of a holy character. This is the basis of their inspiration. They received into honest and good hearts the word of God.

(a) The authors of the Wisdom Literature throw a meditative eye over the various and often perplexing experiences of the saints. The writers or compilers of Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the authors of some of the Psalms belong to this class; they are practical philosophers. They focus the light of revelation upon life, and search its dark places: at times they even attempt a theodicy; they will plead for God. Their arguments run in great breadths; case after case must be put; one hypothesis and then another must be weighed. In Ecclesiastes perhaps the only pure word of God is the conclusion. The case of the Book of Job is similar, yet with a difference. For Ecclesiastes is the testing and sifting of practical errors, errors in conduct; whereas Job is the discrimination of rival

<sup>1</sup> *Advancement of Learning*, Book I.

theories, all of which are imperfect, but all of which contain scintillations of the perfect truth. The three friends of the afflicted man of Uz are expressly censured. Elihu is condemned by implication. Job himself acknowledges his ignorance. Yet in each of the strophes there is some true word spoken for God. The Book of Proverbs, again, is practical; but unlike Ecclesiastes it is from first to last the application to conduct of the principles enshrined in the revelation. Each sentence, therefore, carries weight, and has behind it the force of a great principle. But life is many-edged, and the authors of the proverbs apply their sententious wisdom first to one aspect, and then to another, of a given situation. This book also must be read and used as a whole. The Wisdom Psalms are brief, but even with regard to them one must "look to the end," for the writers are wont to turn back and survey the devious path by which they have reached the solid ground of faith. Such a Psalm is the lxxiii. Now that he has found rest for himself, the writer can afford to say openly the things which seemed, only a little while before, to be as blasphemy: "If I had said, I will speak thus; behold, I had dealt treacherously with the generation of Thy children." But now, in view of what he has still to confess, he will dare to say it.

Yet in this Wisdom Literature we find many precious evidences of inspiration. The author of Ecclesiastes brings his sad monologue to a close with the deliberate statement: "The Preacher sought to find out acceptable words, and that which was written uprightly, even

words of truth." In Job the final vision is given at the mouth of the Lord, but there is no lack of evidence to show that the interlocutors in this great drama are building their argument on a basis of Scripture. Eliphaz urges Job to a more lively credence in the divine oracles: "Receive, I pray thee, the law from His mouth, and lay up His words in thine heart." And Job answers: "I have not gone back from the commandment of His lips: I have treasured up the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job xxii. 22, xxiii. 12).

In the Book of Proverbs we find, as we should expect, a more frequent assertion of inspirational authority. At times the writer (there are, of course, more than one) identifies his instruction with the teaching of the Wisdom of God (viii.). Again, he speaks in the name of the wise, those in Israel who love wisdom and follow truth, and asserts the authoritative character of his speech: "Have not I written unto thee excellent things of counsels and knowledge; to make thee know the certainty of the words of truth, that thou mayest carry back words of truth to them that send thee?" (xxii. 20, 21). At another time he speaks of the pure word of God, which may refer to the Scriptures already received, but which is more probably a reference to the witness of Jehovah, revealed in experience, and written on the heart: "Every word of God is tried: He is a shield unto them that trust in Him. Add thou not unto His words, lest He reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (xxx. 5, 6).

In the Wisdom Psalms we have a similar conception

of the divine word: "The mouth of the righteous talketh of wisdom, and his tongue speaketh judgment. The law of his God is in his heart" (Ps. xxxvii. 30, 31).

(b) The Devotional Literature of Israel belongs to the same order as the Wisdom Literature, but is different in character. It also is the response of the soul to the revelation of God. The Psalms rise from the quiet depths of the spirit, where God and man are at one. Law, History, Prophecy are the invitation and command of God to seek His face; the Psalter is the answer of the soul, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." The inspiration of the Psalms lies in their character rather than in direct assertions of authority, yet direct statements of inspiration are not wanting. It will be sufficient to adduce one or two of them:—

"David the son of Jesse saith, and the man who was raised up on high saith, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was upon my tongue. The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me—. . . This shall be written for the generation to come: and a people which shall be created shall praise the Lord. . . . How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord? . . . Wherefore, even as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. . . . He again defineth a certain day, saying in David, after so long a time, To-day" (2 Sam. xxiii. 2, 3; Ps. cii. 18; Matt. xxii. 43; Heb. iii. 7, iv. 7).

But indeed we need neither argument nor assertion to convince us of the presence of the Divine Breath in

the Psalms. In them, as Dean Church has remarked, "the religious affections are full-grown." The deep places of the human spirit are discovered in those "dark sayings upon a harp"; the loftiest attainment of the Christian believer has not outsoared their devotion. Out of their unfailing fountains streams of blessing still descend, as from some Lebanon, for the refreshment of the garden of the Lord. Luther exclaims against the hardihood of any man who thinks that he has sounded the depths of a single Psalm.

4. The inspiration of the Prophetical Writings is different from any that we have yet considered. The evidence regarding it is so full that we cannot compress it into a section of a chapter. And as "prophecy" is a general term for the communication of the divine revelation, it is desirable to treat this subject with greater fulness than we have been able to bestow on any of the foregoing forms of the utterance of God.



VI

*Prophecy*

*“ It is not that we are to expect to find in the prophetic page certain points and passages marked out and delineated, as in the map of a country, in which we are about to travel ; but much rather certain principles and truths in germ, certain apparent indications of a conceived design awaiting accomplishment, which shall prepare us for the fuller enunciation of those truths, and shall themselves receive an accession of light as the progress of events rolls on.”*

STANLEY LEATHES.

## VI

### *Prophecy*

THE word "Prophecy" is employed in Scripture, sometimes in a larger, sometimes in a stricter sense. In its narrower meaning it indicates the inspired utterances of the preachers in Israel, men whose duty it was to expound the law, emphasising its ethical import, while, at the same time, they filled in with ever-increasing clearness the first dim outlines of the Messianic hope. In its wider reference it applies to inspired utterance generally. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of the coming of Christ (Jude 14). Moses the law-giver was one of the greatest figures in the prophetic succession (Deut. xxxiv. 10). The annalists of Israel were for the most part prophets (1 Chron. xxix. 29). David and other sacred poets of the Hebrews prophesied (Mark xii. 36; Heb. iv. 7). And prophecy was a gift of the Spirit richly bestowed upon the preachers of the early Church (1 Cor. xii. 10; 1 Tim. i. 18).

The descriptive titles of the prophets in Israel are chiefly as follows:

In relation to Jehovah they are termed Men of the Spirit (Hos. ix. 7; Mic. iii. 8), or Men of God

(Deut. xxxiii. 1; 2 Chron. viii. 14; 2 Kings iv. 7). In their appreciation of the truth they were Seers (2 Chron. ix. 29; Isa. xxx. 10). In their transmission of the word committed to them they were Messengers (Isa. xlii. 19; Hag. i. 13; Mal. iii. 1), Interpreters (Job xxxiii. 23; Isa. xliii. 27), or Prophets.

Each of these names discloses some quality of the gift of inspiration. Let us consider them in the order in which we have named them.

1. The Hebrew prophets are styled "Men of the Spirit." The original meaning of "spirit" is breath, and breath is the sense-image which stands for life. The Spirit of God is God present and operative—in creation (Gen. i. 2), in providence (Isa. lxiii. 10, 14), and in the soul of man (Ezek. iii. 24). The Spirit is represented as coming mightily upon (Judg. xiv. 6), clothing Himself with (1 Chron. xii. 18), entering into (Ezek. ii. 2), inhabiting (Gen. xli. 38), and filling (Num. xxxiv. 9) the selected instruments of God. The presence of the Spirit secures the reception of certain gifts — apprehensiveness (Ex. xxxv. 31), understanding (Job xxxii. 8), prowess (Judg. xiii. 25), administrative faculty (Judg. iii. 10), sanctity (Ps. li. 11, 12). But by far the larger number of references point to the bestowment of the gift of prophecy. It will be helpful to quote a few of the most distinctive passages relating to this gift:—

"And Moses said, . . . Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them! . . . And the Spirit of God

came mightily upon him, and he prophesied. . . . The Spirit of the Lord spake by me. . . . And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, the priest, . . . and he said unto them, Thus saith God. . . . Thou . . . testifiedst against them by Thy Spirit through Thy prophets: yet they would not give ear. . . . The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. . . . And the Spirit entered into me when He spake with me. . . . And the Spirit of the Lord fell upon me, and He said unto me, Speak, Thus said the Lord. . . . But I truly am full of power by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. . . . The words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit by the hand of the former prophets.”—(Num. xi. 29; 1 Sam. x. 10; 2 Sam. xxiii. 2; 2 Chron. xxiv. 20; Neh. ix. 30; Isa. lxi. 1; Ezek. ii. 2, xi. 5; Mic. iii. 8; Zech. vii. 12.)

2. A distinguishing term, which in time became a designation, is applied, especially in the historical books, to the accredited messengers of Jehovah—“Men of God.” The phrase suggests those who are God’s servants, entirely devoted to Him, and wholly committed to His interest. Elijah was such a one. He was very jealous for the Lord God of hosts; was prepared to face all opposition and to stand alone. None of the things which he encountered caused him to flinch; his ruling ambition was to be approved by his Heavenly Master. Of course, when the expression had become an appellative it became possible to speak of “the man of God which was disobedient,” but this

was a contradiction in terms. In 2 Kings iv. 9 another epithet is added, "a holy man of God"; this is, no doubt, an intensification of the thought of perfect consecration.

In the use of this term, "Man of God," a further thought emerges. A word in Hebrew is not a mere vocable; it does not merely represent a mental concept, it indicates an act. Jehovah speaks, and the work is done. And the man who is His servant is clothed with His authority. This underlying thought is expressed with sufficient clearness in two passages in the life of Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 18, 24; 2 Kings i. 9, 10). The Shunamite had greeted the prophet by this name without question hitherto, but when the word displayed itself in action she said to him, "Now I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is truth." In the other instance, Elijah indicates that the relation to God imputed by the use of this term involves the delegation to him of divine power.

The Apostle Paul carries this term over into the New Testament (1 Tim. vi. 11; 2 Tim. iii. 17).

3. The word "Seer" is deeply significant; it throws open to our consideration a large province of Scripture truth. In Hebrew there are two words rendered by this English one, and the distinction between the two is not quite apparent. Possibly that one which is of later use gives special prominence to the thought of contemplation.

The importance of the word "Seer" lies in the fact that—though the word itself fell early into disuse

(1 Sam. ix. 9)—the pronouncements of the prophets continued to be expressed in terms of vision. Of all the senses, that which seems to represent most adequately the immediate apprehension of truth by the mind is sight. Indeed, the exact term for that apprehension is "intuition." In his *Summa* Aquinas asks, "Shall we in the beatific vision gaze upon the divine essence?" He says, "We shall." But, certainly, he did not expect to see God with material eyes, but with the inward sight only.

While sight is, so to speak, the permanent symbol of intuition, other sense-operations mingle with the prophetic experience.

Hearing and seeing are also frequently conjoined: "The word which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw." "I turned to see the voice which spake with me."

Along with the sound of words there may be a sense of touch; "Now as he was speaking with me, I fell into a deep sleep, with my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright."

Occasionally, there is the sense of taste entering into the vision: "He said unto me, Son of man, eat that thou findest; eat this roll, and go, speak unto the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat the roll. . . . Then did I eat; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness."<sup>1</sup>

Now, these physical impressions are either reminis-

<sup>1</sup> One might almost think that there is a suggestion of the sense of smell, in Rev. viii. 3: "There was given unto him much incense, that he should add it unto the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up before God out of the angel's hand."

cent, as in a dream, or they serve to illustrate an experience which lies beyond sense-perception altogether, as when, in a trance, the mind sinks into the subconscious self—the home of those mysterious impulses which, in the lower orders of being, we term instinctive. It is in that region that the springs of our religious life arise. It is there that the Divine Spirit establishes His secure control over our life.

(a) Instruction given in a dream is possibly the lowest form of inspiration (Num. xii. 6–8). In sleep the mind is not wholly quiescent, but the volitional powers lie under arrest; and so the nature is more open than at other times to the touch of the spiritual world. Dreams may be merely the disordered fancies of the mind; and if the mind is alienated from God the spirit of falsehood will mingle with the night visions, the prophet will be deluded, and his delusion will cause others to err. It was incumbent on the prophets, therefore, that they should bring their dreams to the test of the revelation already given and accredited (Deut. xiii. 1–5; Jer. xxix. 8, 9). The action of the Divine Spirit on the dreamer is usually to lift into the light of truth and holiness the events which have passed before the seer in his waking hours, perhaps recently (Gen. xxviii. 12), perhaps many years before (Joel ii. 28). But there are occasions when the Spirit of God in a dream communicates new truth (Matt. i. 20). At times, the dream passes into a trance (Dan. vii. 1, 15).

(b) A trance is an experience so much less common than a dream, and so much less normal, that when we



speak of it we approach the region of mystery. The Apostle Paul has given us an illuminative description of a rapture which he experienced in the early years of his apostleship.

“ I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a man in Christ, fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I know not ; or whether out of the body, I know not ; God knoweth), such a one caught up even to the third heaven. And I know such a man (whether in the body or apart from the body, I know not ; God knoweth), how that he was caught up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.” (2 Cor. xii. 1-4.)

Here plainly is the seal of mystery, and the warning, “ Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God.” In the depths of the spirit, where God and man are at one, the vision of truth appears and the voice of the Eternal is heard. That which is seen and heard there cannot be fully communicated to another : that which may be spoken can be conveyed to the intelligence only in terms of sense-perception. Thus we may observe the prophet, who in a trance (as, for example, Ezekiel) has seen “ visions of God,” struggling painfully to express in words that which actually transcends the potentiality of human speech. Sometimes the experience of the prophet was turbulent, and his soul was as the world-sea of the Apocalypse, where the four winds of heaven strove together in resistless wrath. At other times the hush of God brooded over the spirit which lay before Him, as the sea of glass mingled with fire, slumbering

under the throne of the eternal rest. Professor Inge, of Cambridge, offers a definition of the trance-mood, which, if it does not exhaust the biblical phenomena that characterise this experience, at least insists rightly upon the self-control, within the God-control, of the subject of divine illumination :

“Ecstasy or vision begins when thought ceases, to our consciousness, to proceed from ourselves. It differs from dreaming because the subject is awake. It differs from hallucination, because there is no organic disturbance; it is, or claims to be, a temporary enhancement, not a partial disintegration, of the mental faculties. Lastly, it differs from poetical inspiration, because the imagination is passive.”<sup>1</sup>

It is simpler, and perhaps sufficient, to say that spiritual ecstasy is *contemplation in its most intense exercise*. It is the uniting (Ps. lxxxvi. 11) of the faculties in one act of spiritual intuition, or apprehension.

4. The word “Messenger” implies that Jehovah has not merely made His name known among men, but has also entered into personal relations with them; that He communicates to them certain proposals which demand an answer. The messenger of God is the bearer of His gracious and holy utterances to those who are “far off.” He is now the herald proclaiming the near advent of the Promised One (Isa. xl. 3), now the ambassador unclasping the overtures of salvation, and drawing men on to reconciliation with a just and merciful God (2 Cor. v. 20); and always he is the bearer of the message of grace enshrined in the

<sup>1</sup> *Christian Mysticism*, p. 14.

covenant which was foreordained in the divine wisdom, ordered and made sure in the course of time, and, in Christ's sacrifice, sealed with blood (Mal. iii. 1). The long line of "the messengers of Jehovah in Jehovah's message" was at last fulfilled in that coming One to whom all the prophets witnessed.

5. An "Interpreter" is one who translates the language of the country from which he has come, or of the court from which he has received authorisation, into the vernacular of those whom he has been commissioned to address. The interpreter of the divine will unfolds the inward meaning of the message committed to him, removing misconception and clearing away obscurity. He takes the word of God which was delivered in the law or expressed in history, penetrates to the divine intention, and lays bare the imbedded principles of conduct, translating the speech of God into the language of the market-place, the workshop, or the home.

6. But the almost invariable word in Scripture for him who discovers and declares the mind of God is "Prophet."

This word with its cognates is found in the Old Testament more than 400 times: the corresponding words in the New Testament occur 200 times. The Old Testament word runs back into the Semitic stock, and its original meaning is not quite certain. Possibly its earliest significance is simply "one who speaks." But the term, when used in a religious sense, came to be generally indicative of one who spoke in the name of Jehovah, the Covenant God of Israel. The Hebrew word for "prophet" thus means originally a

“for-speaker,” or “forth-speaker.” As the message of the God of Israel always reached out to the remote future, when “the day of the Lord” should arise, a secondary meaning of “fore-speaker” was added to the first sense of the term. A prophet in Hebrew speech is essentially a “for-speaker,” a man who stands between Jehovah and His people, and communicates to them the divine encouragements, warnings, and rebukes. It does not appear that the thought of excited utterance, however it may have attached itself later to the word, inheres in the term itself.

This term was certainly in use in the days of Moses. The law-giver was an outstanding and typical example of prophetism in Israel :

“And the Lord said, . . . I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee ; and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him” (Deut. xviii. 17, 18).

The immediate reference is to the Messiah, but the word of the Lord glances off from the announcement of Him who was to come, and sweeps along the whole course of prophecy between Moses and Christ (verses 20-22). It is true that the law-giver of Israel was separated from among his brethren, but it was merely by way of eminence: he was solitary in his degree (Num. xii. 6-8).

Coincidentally with what we should now call a “revival” in Israel, a fresh outburst of prophecy occurred at various points in the history. In the days

of Samuel, and after, we find that there were prophetic *cænobia* or settlements, where companies of "sons of the prophets" resided. It might seem as if prophetism had become professional. But the great prophets, those of whom we naturally think when we use the term, were not usually drawn from those prophetic habitations. There were many "schools" of the prophets in the days of Elijah, but when he was instructed to choose a successor he was guided to a young farm-lad, who was ploughing in the corn-lands of Issachar. And there are not wanting signs of the jealousy with which the sons of the prophets regarded Elisha, the son of Shaphat. One might suppose that the habitations of the prophets were the culture-beds from which the Lord from time to time selected such "forth-tellers" of His message as He had need of, and no doubt in certain cases it was so; but more commonly He seems to have laid His hand on those who stood outside the prophetic profession—as in the case of Amos, who said to Amaziah, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was an herdman, and a dresser of sycamore trees; and the Lord took me from following the flock, and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel."

Thus we see that there were two classes of prophets in Israel, those who (under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, as we may believe) adopted prophetism as a profession, and those who were directly and divinely called. The former class probably became expositors of the written Word, and held that place in the religion of Israel which was afterwards filled by the scribes.

They were interpreters, not originators of prophetic truth.

The canonical prophets belonged to the non-professional class. The Spirit of God brought them into an immediate relation to Jehovah; the divine word came to them affecting mind and heart, oppressing them with its urgency and burden, until it had been communicated to those for whose sake it had been given. The prophet Jeremiah is a signal example of those who cherished this sense of urgency (vi. 11, xx. 9), but all were sensible of it; the disciples said, "We cannot but speak the things which we saw and heard"; and the Apostle Paul, always mindful that a stewardship had been entrusted to him, was led to cry out, "Necessity is laid upon me, . . . woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." The divine communications committed to the prophets were messages (Hag. i. 13) which, on the peril of their soul, they must deliver.

VII

*The Prophetic Afflatus*

*“A moral being is never a machine. The prophets uttered truths which had taken hold of their own souls, proclaimed hopes which swelled their own hearts, and pointed the eyes of their countrymen to glorious visions of a day, the dawning of which they themselves had already seen.”*

A. B. DAVIDSON.



## VII

### *The Prophetic Afflatus*

THE Apostle Peter assures us that no prophecy ever came by the impulse of one's own mental force (2 Pet. i. 21); but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost. This may seem to have been a generalisation from a large number of Scripture statements. The hand of power fell upon the prophets, and they could not choose but speak. Speak they did, but often most unwillingly. Send by some other messenger, said Moses. I cannot speak; I am a child, mourned Jeremiah. Jonah answered roundly, I will not go. Yet neither disinclination nor fear prevailed: they spoke the word of God even under the anathema and the woe, whether men would hear or whether they would forbear, because they were under the impulsion of the Divine Spirit. The messengers of the holy word clearly recognised that, however it may have come through their own experience, up from their own hearts, it was yet a word from without, having an external and resistless authority: it was the word of God. Let the prophet Ezekiel afford a single instance of that which every prophet confirms: "Son of man, I send thee to the

children of Israel, . . . and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God. . . . But thou, son of man, hear what I say unto thee; be not thou rebellious like that rebellious house: open thy mouth, and eat that I give thee. . . . So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat the roll. . . . Moreover, He said unto me, Son of man, all My words that I shall speak unto thee receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears. Then the Spirit lifted me up . . . and took me away: and I went in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit, and the hand of the Lord was strong upon me" (chaps. ii, iii.).

Those who received the prophetic call were already the intimates of God. Their minds had been exercised upon the problems of religion and life; and in the vision of God those prolonged meditations were fused as by a lightning-flash. Many years of contemplation upon the divine nature must have been gathered into one profound experience when Moses saw, in the bush that burned and was not consumed, the glory of Jehovah. It was with the prophets, no doubt, as it was with the disciples; they were called first to personal intimacy, then they were commissioned to preach the gospel. Not every disciple was chosen to be an apostle; Jesus called unto Him whom He would, and they came unto Him. The call to apostleship is the nearest analogy to the vocation of a prophet: in each case the impulsion of the Spirit is similar: the voice of the prophet is, "I was weary with forbearing, and could not stay"; and the voice of the apostle, "Woe unto me if I preach not the gospel."

The manner in which the prophetic inspiration came to the sacred writers varied according to circumstances, varied also according to the character of the recipient. Isaiah, worshipping in the temple in Jerusalem, was caught up in the Spirit into the recognition of the perfect worship of the Upper Sanctuary. Jeremiah went down to the potter's house; and, as he marked the action of the artificer on the mass of plastic material lying under his hand, was enabled to read the purpose of God towards idolatrous and apostate Israel. Ezekiel fell into a trance by the waters of weeping and of cleansing, and saw visions of God. Jonah heard the voice of God in the withering of a gourd. Hosea looked into his own heart, and wrote, as if with his blood, of the love of God to His unfaithful bride. Zechariah saw in the material temple that was growing to completion under the hand of Zerubbabel the pattern of the spiritual temple in which the unseen Presence dwells.

The mental mood in which the prophetic afflatus found and left the subject of the Spirit's action is a matter of some interest, although Scripture says little on these points. Here also there is constant variety.

At times, the Spirit falls on a prophet with the most startling suddenness, and he is, as it were, caught up into an ecstasy; at other times, certain acts of preparation seem to have preceded the advent of the Spirit.

Often the inward voice called the messenger of the divine will into strict solitude, the mountain

(Ex. xix. 20), the riverside (Dan. x. 4), the plain (Ezek. iii. 22), the desert (Luke i. 80, iii. 3).

What the Master hath spoken in darkness,  
That speak ye in the light;  
For the mightiest sons of thunder  
Were the lonely seers of night.

It was in the silence of secret-questioning that the Spirit of God revealed to lonely men the eternal Name.<sup>1</sup>

Another preliminary requirement of the Spirit of inspiration which was usually observed, was that hush of mind in which alone one can find a perfect balance of the mental powers. Elisha, standing before Jehoshaphat and Ahab, and being called on to give a prophetic decision, said: "But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, while the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him" (2 Kings iii. 15).<sup>2</sup> It has been suggested, but with no great plausibility, that the fact that the divine oracles were often given in the neighbourhood of rivers may indicate that the rhythm of the moving waters tended to calm the mind of the prophet, like the harmonious beat of music.<sup>3</sup> However this may be, it is evident that a certain state of mental repose was customarily a precedent condition of the operation of the Spirit. This "uniting of the heart to fear the name of the Lord" has its correspondent experience in that self-induced quiescence of the mind which seemed to

<sup>1</sup> But see 2 Chron. xx. 14, and similar passages.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. 1 Sam. x. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Davidson, *Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 128.

the "ascetic theologians" of the Middle Ages the prime necessity for the contemplation of the divine perfections. "The first duty of a contemplative," said a fourteenth-century recluse, "is to sit still." The dew falls on the calm night. The Spirit comes to minds that are freed from earthly passion. "Be still, and know that I am God"; "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him."<sup>1</sup>

Fasting may have been another preparation for the prophetic revelation. We find in the Old Testament three recorded withdrawals of prophets for a period of forty days; and of the visions crowded into these days fasting seems to have been an accompaniment, if not a condition (Ex. xxiv. 12-18, xxxiv. 1-28; 1 Kings xix.). This feature of the prophetic impulse is marked in the life of the Lord Himself: "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan, and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness during forty days, being tempted of the devil. And He did eat nothing in those days: and when they were completed, He hungered." Fasting seems to have for its purpose the subdual of the flesh to become a fit

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the mental tumult which occasionally followed the advent of the prophetic word, Dr. A. B. Davidson remarks: "This is evident, the worse prepared in general the prophet was, the less illuminated and subdued his sinful nature was, the stronger were the convulsions into which the Spirit threw him. Thus in Saul, a character not wholly bad, but with the elements of a noble nature in him, these never united into harmonious activity, but were always rent and kept asunder by some suspicion, or vice, or self-will, ending at times in complete madness. When the Spirit came on him it raised the wildest tumult in his breast, warring with incongruous elements there; and he was thrown down by the violence of the struggle, and lay all night on the ground and prophesied."—*Old Testament Prophecy*, p. 124.

organ of the Spirit, so that the spirit of man may pass unimpeded through its material integument and rise into an immediate recognition of God.

These are the chief preparations for the reception of the prophetic afflatus which are referred to in Scripture.<sup>1</sup> The condition of mind of the seer when the prophetic impulse has passed varies also with the person and the occasion.

Samuel, the child, hears the voice of God. Startled into a new sense of spiritual realities by the divine word, and yet not greatly perturbed, the young Nazirite "lay until the morning, and opened the doors of the house of the Lord." Jeremiah, a child-like nature, finds enjoyment and repose in communion with God: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy words were unto me a joy and the rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts." Daniel, the statesman and man of affairs, has a sterner experience: "I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength."

A corresponding difference in the mood of the prophet after the inspirational influence has passed is due to the nature of the truth revealed. At times the mental emotions are well under control; whatever tension of feeling there may be is allowed to express itself in a customary fashion. At other times there is much excitation, as, for example, in the case of Ezekiel: "Then I came to them of the captivity at

<sup>1</sup> Prayer is of course presupposed in all of these.

Tel-abib, that dwelt by the river Chebar, and to where they dwelt; and I sat there astonished among them seven days"; or as in the case of Daniel: "And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; then I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the the vision, but none understood it."

Some writers on prophecy distinguish between the trance and the vision. Originally, perhaps, they were one; but whereas the trance-state persisted to the last age of prophecy, the word "vision" received after a time a much wider signification. The history of the change of meaning may have been somewhat after this fashion.

The general mystical formula, that the eyes of the understanding must be closed, in order that the eyes of the spirit may see, seems to express the earliest conception of the prophetic state. In sleep, or in the rapt ecstasy of contemplation, the usual activities of the mind were stilled, and a new train of intellectual apprehension originated. This trance-state, as we have already seen, implies contemplation raised to the highest pitch of mental energy.<sup>1</sup> In later times, when the mental powers were more highly trained, and had been brought more powerfully under the control of the Divine Spirit, the chasm between the operations of the understanding and of the spirit was bridged, the cleft in the personal life was healed, and inspiration was received by the

<sup>1</sup> The lives of the mystics, from Plotinus to Tennyson, contain many suggestive descriptions of the trance-state. Among religious biographies, those of William Tennant, John Flavel, and Mrs. Edwards of Northampton are worthy of notice.

whole intellectual nature of man. But the apprehension of divine things was still spoken of as "vision," and for this reason, at the first, that the appeal was still primarily to the imagination. It is only in the loftiest exercise of prophecy that the working of the imagination is restrained, and the truth presents itself full-orbed to the understanding. Such was the inspiration, if we may use the term, of our Lord. He saw the truth not in emblem, nor in distinction, but in fulness: "Verily, verily, I say unto you." "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life."

The impulse to record the prophecies which had been delivered, in oral speech, was communicated by the Spirit. To Jeremiah, for example, the commandment came thus: "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord, the God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book." It has been suggested that this injunction of the Spirit was mediated through a sense of failure: since the contemporaries of the prophet would not hear, he would seek an audience in generations still unborn. Rather, it was his assurance of the truth which impelled the sacred writer to record his prophecies. He felt as did the Psalmist, who exclaimed when he gazed upon the beauty of divine truth, "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." He knew that through all changing years the word which had been communicated to him by the Eternal Spirit was of enduring worth and force.

We may ask, In what way did so firm an assurance



form itself in the mind of the prophet? We may perhaps find an analogy in what the apostles term the *witness* of the Spirit of God, penetrating and interacting with the inward testimony of the created spirit. The assurance which is thus given to us is such that the truth so confirmed seems to be of most certain validity. When it is at its full strength we cannot unthink it: it seems to be written across our nature, and to belong to our intellectual constitution. This assurance fluctuates, but when it attains its perfect demonstration it is the surest of all knowledge. With the Hebrew prophets it was as if the truth given them to utter had become necessary, a part of their mental framework. As this assurance waxed or waned, the moods of the prophets changed. At one time they set their face as a flint; at another, they felt themselves to be feeble and grovelling as a worm. John the Baptist said of the young Carpenter from Nazareth, "I have seen, and have borne witness, that this is the Son of God"; yet, at a later time, he sent messengers to Jesus, saying: "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" Faith, like Giant Despair, has its fainting fits.

The theme of Hebrew prophecy is the advent of the Messiah, and the fulfilment of His suretyship: "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." But the portrait of the promised Deliverer is framed within the national life of Israel. And so it comes to pass that the prophets speak to their own times with the utmost directness, yet all the while enunciate eternal truth. Their gaze sweeps the wide expanse before them, and

reaches on to the gates of the City of God. Their ethical teaching is the making of straight paths for the Redeemer's feet, the "evangelical preparation" for Christ. Precepts of moral conduct are steps which lead, like an altar stairway, up to the great atonement. The name of Israel is "The Lord our righteousness" (Jer. xxxiii. 16); the name of Jerusalem, "The Lord is there" (Ezek. xlvi. 35).

VIII

*The Bible and Science*

*“This book of stars lights to eternal bliss.”*

GEORGE HERBERT.

## VIII

### *The Bible and Science*

IN the course of some suggestive reflections on the attitude of the modern mind, Dr. Inge observes that an unformulated philosophy of life is generally much deeper and more respectable than the arguments by which it is commonly supported; and he adds: "It is this which makes theological controversy so generally barren and futile: the disputants have reasons for their beliefs which they cannot express, and of which they are more than half unconscious; they try to reason, because they are on their defence; but they are not prepared to acknowledge defeat, because they know that their convictions are too deep to be upset by mere logic."

To take up a sweeping challenge against modern thought would be a foolish and arrogant proceeding. We dare not do it; for God, who fulfils Himself in many ways, is with us as truly as He was with our fathers. And yet "the modern mind" blunders and stumbles, just as the mind of the past has done. It makes false starts; it beats back upon its course; it does not see its tokens. And we, who are children neither of yesterday nor of to-day, but of eternity,

must thread our steps warily, and humbly implore the guidance of that Spirit who confers wisdom on all who follow truth.

## I

The conception of "evolution" as an all-embracing law of God has taken captive the imagination of our time; and it would almost seem that no statement of truth can win a hearing until it has first come to terms with this controlling thought. But discrimination is necessary here. Evolution is a term which still awaits definition. The law of progress evades the strictest and most adventurous scrutiny: science itself makes haste to confess that no recognised theory of development is able to account for all the facts of nature and life. Moreover, to admit that evolution is a method of the creative and providential efficiency of God, a method which operates all along the scale of being, influencing life in each degree, is a quite different thing from the assertion that progress through modification is the single principle of the divine operation.

Let it be granted that evolution is a method of the divine working in the mutations of inanimate nature and the progressions of sentient life. It is necessary that we should conceive this method in all its myriad relations, presenting it for consideration and acceptance in the light of all the correspondent facts. In the realm of animated nature evolution moves under the impulse of one great law, modified by ten thousand conflicting circumstances. But, as we have said, that law still evades detection. This being so, the possi-

bilities of an evolutionary sequence are still undetermined. We may frame inclusive terms — “mutation,” “variation,” “correlation,”—which will gather related facts into assorted groups. These, again, we may bind into one faggot under some general term—as, for example, “Natural Selection.” But no term sufficiently inclusive to hold within itself the complete statement of the law of evolution has yet been found. No term, therefore, in present use can fairly be taken to measure the efficiency of that law. As yet, “evolution” as a term is merely an expression of the divine activity moving onward and upward towards a predestined end.

The Schoolmen, who always had some vast conception of the cosmos either in the forge or on the anvil, suggested that the law of progress lay hidden in the being of God. “God,” they said, “is pure act”; that is, as they defined the phrase, “act without any potentiality.” The whole being of God was in each creative effect: in all His working the sum of the divine attributes was declared. Perhaps those old-world thinkers have gone as far as it is possible for thought to go. Whatever the process of the divine efficiency, the law of nature, in the last resort, must be defined in terms of the wisdom and love of God.

A fire-mist, and a planet,  
 A crystal, and a cell,  
 A jelly-fish, and a saurian,  
 The cave where the cave-men dwell—  
 Then a sense of law and beauty,  
 And a face turned from the clod—  
 Some call it “evolution,”  
 And others call it “God.”

The attempt has been made—with less success—to trace the evolutionary process in the region of history. It may be that the law of development holds as truly here as in sentient nature, but in this case it operates upon such varied elements that its course can never be predicted, and can be detected only when one has an intimate acquaintance with relative facts.<sup>1</sup> The Platonists long ago taught that the path of development is not a straight line, but a spiral whorl; that it moves upwards, not with obvious precision, but with apparent hesitations and retrogressions.<sup>2</sup> And a great modern philosopher, whose special contribution to thought has been his powerful defence of evolution in history, has told us that the upward progress of the race is often and tragically barred by that dark energy which we call "sin."

That there is an evident progress of doctrine in Scripture, no one can doubt. But it is not consistent and equal. Its emblem is not the crescent moon, growing to fulness with each passing hour. The inconstant spring of our northern climate affords a more just representation of the movement of revelation towards completion. There is progress, but it is countered and crossed by opposing influences; there are numerous periods of arrest, and endless retardations. One steadfast current sets towards the summer

<sup>1</sup> "Geologists may be right in being suspicious of catastrophies; but in the diviner regions evolution is not a peaceful movement—it goes on through darkness, agitation, confusion."—R. W. Dale, *Life*, p. 548.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Tennyson, *Locksley Hall: Sixty Years After*—

"Evolution ever climbing after some ideal good,  
And reversion ever dragging evolution in the mud."



seas; but it is broken by the rise and fall of every tide.

It is important also to remember that the progress of revelation is not an evolution from barbarism. We are now familiar with the Chaldea of Abraham's day, the Egypt of the time of Moses, the Canaan of the age of Joshua. We are aware that in those years when, as we believe, the first books of the Bible were penned, an ancient and lettered civilisation overspread the lands of Scripture. The Word of God has, from the beginning, a free outlook into the history of the world. We acknowledge that there is in the earlier Scriptures immaturity; but it is such as is seen in the unripe ear—immaturity which contains "the promise and potency" of perfected life. We willingly confess that the doctrine moves forward into fuller light and more measured statement; but it moves along the high level of inspiration from the first. The progress of doctrine of which we speak is a progress that is sensible neither of conflict nor of reconciliation. The first word of Scripture is an utterance of God; the first promise has in it the anticipation of completed redemption; the first act of worship looks fixedly towards Calvary. The promise of the end is in the opening chapters; the resonance of the first word vibrates in the last. It is a progress presided over by one mind, and that the mind of Christ. The two elements in this progress are a fuller content of truth and a closer relation to the Person of the Redeemer.

On any reasonable theory of criticism we cannot doubt that the great precept of the law: "*Hear, O*

*Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might,"* stands close up to the beginning of Israel's history. A development of truth which has for one of its earliest waymarks the recognition of the oneness and spirituality of God, together with an unqualified faith in His utter loveliness and love-worthiness, has not very far to run, even though its progress is destined to terminate in the Person and work of Christ.

Those who affirm that evolution as a single key explains everything in nature go beyond the ascertained facts, and are, so far, unscientific. They are liable to stumble over the fact of Christ. They say, He is not, and must not be made a supernatural Being; He belongs to the causal connection of events.

But what if He by word and action confesses and evidences Himself to be a supernatural Being, belonging indeed to the causal connection of events, yet entering the race by an immediate act of God? Science can say nothing to discredit the Christian dogma. For a just conception of the divine immanence compels us to postulate the divine transcendence. God cannot be fettered within the frame of His own creation. And the archetypal Word of God must, in the necessity of His being, move freely in, and through, and beyond the rigid course of the evolutionary sequence. As light fills the air, yet neither absorbs nor alters it, so God may fill our human nature with Himself, in such wise that He who

became very man shall not cease to be the Solc-begotten of the Father.

After all, we are thrown back here, as elsewhere, on experience.

The supreme truth of Christianity is Christ. By what happy complex of circumstances did the conflicting streams of tendency produce a Being of utter holiness and of infinite love, a Man who was declared with power to be the Son of God? Or does Christianity, shorn of its accidents, secure its harmony with the general cosmic process by accepting a Saviour who was only one of ourselves, although (it may be conceded) greater, higher, purer? Had the Lord Jesus to struggle against "the ape and tiger" in Himself? And shall our divinity be germane to His?

The ordering purpose of the incarnation was to save—to save by the blood of ransom. But if what we call "evil" is merely a survival, the residuum of man's bestial history, the footprints of ascending nature, the unfinished handiwork of God; if man has not fallen, but risen; if, after innumerable ages, the discords of our nature shall be reduced to harmony; and if evil, even now, has a soul of goodness in it, how does it come to pass that pardon was so dearly bought, bought by the merit and the passion of God's well-beloved Son?

And with respect to the experiences of the Christian life, do the processes of development afford scope for all those transactions of the spirit of man with the Eternal Spirit which constitute the veritable existence of the children of God? Or is the Jansenist satire

still in point? Is God "forbidden to work miracles here—by order"?

To the believer the answer to these questions is not doubtful:—

"We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John v. 20).

And to this assurance science offers no denial.

## II

When Galileo<sup>1</sup> was denounced as a heretic by the Roman Inquisition, he replied, so it is said: "The Scriptures were given, not to tell us how the heavens go, but to teach us how to go to heaven."<sup>2</sup> That the Bible is *non-scientific* is apparent to the most indifferent reader; but it by no means follows that it is therefore *unscientific*. The facts which science carefully clothes in a useful but cumbrous terminology are delivered to us by the sacred writers in the vernacular, and are reported from another point of observation.<sup>3</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> When Galileo announced the discovery of the satellites of Jupiter there was much incredulity and not a little disquietude. Clavius, protesting eagerly, looked through Galileo's telescope, and was convinced. Another astronomer, more prudent, refused to look, lest he should see the circling moons, and be constrained to confess that he had been in error. When Galileo heard of this one's death, soon after, he caustically remarked, "I hope that he saw them on his way to heaven."

<sup>2</sup> A similar sentence is found in Baronius.

<sup>3</sup> Outside the Villa Medici in Rome, where Galileo was imprisoned, a monument has been erected to his memory. The inscription upon the stone refers to the accusation laid against the astronomer, and adds: "He was condemned because he *saw* the earth go round the sun." The in-

Scripture tells us, as any modern would, that the sun rises and sets, that the stars appear and decline, that the moon walks in brightness or in eclipse. From the point of observation of the everyday beholder the earth is the centre of the solar system. On the other hand, from a place of vantage accessible only to highly trained minds an entirely different set of facts appears. These facts lie in a higher region. There are thus, as it were, two spheres of truth. It might be anticipated that an inspired word would raise us at once to the higher sphere. But we must remember that those matters which we term "scientific" were to the ancients, for the most part, subjects of common observation. And the Bible was addressed to men in that region of truth in which they were. When, therefore, we observe that it is the usage of the sacred writers to speak from the standpoint of direct observation, we recognise that this is the order of the divine wisdom.

For, in the first place, the Bible is a book of plain speech, addressing itself so intimately to the thoughts of men that even the *unlearned and ignorant* may hear it speak, every man in his own tongue wherein he was born, the wonderful works of God. God has in this Book uttered His revelation in such a fashion that it might be freely "understood of the people."

Again, it is included within man's birthright that he quisitors might quite truthfully have urged that they too had seen, and that the result of their observation was contrary to his. But the facts on which Galileo based his conclusions had the right of authority over those which were patent to the Roman ecclesiastics, and in refusing to accept his verdict these committed an offence against truth.

should subdue the earth (Gen. i. 28), should bring its various forces under obedience, and should appropriate to his own uses its vast reserves. Now, *it is the glory of God to conceal a thing*. It would not be in accordance with His method of disciplining the race were He to enclose a scheme of scientific truth within the written Word. In his search after principles, man not only acquires the knowledge which he covets, but he educates himself, and so enriches his mental powers.

If the Scriptures were the key to open the mysteries of matter and motion, men would turn to the Bible as to a great arcanum of scientific disclosure. They would study it as the Rosicrucians studied metallurgy, not that they might know the truth respecting each element, but that they might discover the philosopher's stone and find the elixir of immortality. The Bible was given us that we might believe on God and on Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

Once more, one ought not to look for the equation of science and revelation; for, while the last word of revelation has been uttered, at least until the return of Christ, science is only now in the mid-time of its march towards ultimate truth. There are fields of research in which a book is out of date almost before it is printed. Reconciliation—if the word may be allowed to describe a distinction in which there is no disagreement—between human research and the divine revelation has always been premature: it would not be less so now than in the eleventh century. The marvel of the Bible—and this is one high proof of its inspiration—is that it is able to treat of matters which

belong to science in such a way that at no period in the world's course of knowledge has it been impossible, or even difficult, for men whose life-interest lay in scientific research to receive the truth of revelation enshrined within the Word of God.

The scope of Scripture lies, it may be allowed, beyond the domain of science. Yet the Word of God, when fairly interpreted, never comes into conflict with the truth of nature. He whose voice is heard in nature is the God of the Book; and He cannot deny Himself. While the sacred writers speak in terms of the knowledge of their time, we do not find that they speak contrary to science; that is to say, we do not find in the Bible untrue statements regarding natural things.

To illustrate what has been said, let us consider briefly that subject which, of all others, is the most eagerly questioned—the creation narrative.

The opening section of Genesis is an ancient battleground, and still, from time to time, the noise of conflict echoes around it. One is disposed to wonder if so much controversy is really required in the interests of truth. Richard Hooker, writing in a contentious age, took occasion to argue that controversialists should be at pains to understand their opponents, and to appreciate their point of view. The observance of such a rule would obviate much confusion and would save many words.

The Genesis narrative of creation approaches so nearly to a scientific statement of the origin of the cosmos, that it has become common to speak of "the Mosaic cosmogony," and to compare or contrast it

with the world-view of natural science. For the most part the parallels are remarkably exact. But divergencies also are found, and there are, as always, two ways of accounting for these. There are those who affirm that it is possible to harmonise the Genesis narrative with the testimony of the rocks, who assert with Guyot, Dawson, and Dana, that "the first chapters of Genesis and science are in accord." Others, again, accentuate the apparent discordances, and deny that any true reconciliation can be effected.<sup>1</sup>

This difference of view is not of great importance on either side. One cannot adjust a moving point to one that is fixed; but a fixed and a moving point may provide a parallax, and from the consideration of that parallax important conclusions may be deduced. The revelation in Scripture is a fixed point; a scientific theory is a point in motion.

The apparent contradictions in the scientific and Scriptural accounts of creation run back to a point in

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Driver, one of the most potent defenders of this negative position, refuses to entertain the thought of reconciliation. He compares the geological scheme with the first chapters of Genesis, and concludes: "The two series are evidently at variance. (1) The geological record contains no evidence of clearly-defined periods, such as (*ex hypo.*) are represented by the 'days' of Genesis. This, however, may perhaps be considered a minor discrepancy. (2) In Genesis vegetation is complete two 'days'—*i.e.* periods—before animal life appears: geology shows that they appear simultaneously—even if animal life does not appear first. The two are found side by side in humble forms; and they continue side by side, advancing gradually till the higher and more complete types are reached; one does not appear long before the other. (3) In Genesis fishes and birds appear together (Fifth Day) and precede all land animals (Sixth Day); according to the evidence of geology, birds appear long after fishes, and they are preceded by numerous species of land animals (including in particular 'creeping things')."—*The Book of Genesis*, pp. 21, 22.



the series where the geological record is extremely meagre. We have little acquaintance with the forms of life which existed in the earliest formations. In the great Laurentian masses, for example, we infer the presence of abundant animal and vegetable life from the quantities of oxide of iron and of graphite which are sown through the rocks, and from the foraminiferal channels which go by the name of "Eozoon Canadense."<sup>1</sup> On such data we cannot build a reconciliation with Scripture; on the other hand, such vague inferences equally forbid us to impugn the accuracy of the Scripture record of creation.

It is not the habit of Scripture to speak in the measured terms of science. If the first chapter of Genesis contains a "Cosmogony," we are confronted with a fact which is unique in the written Word. We cannot say, of course, that that which has no counter-

<sup>1</sup> "The Laurentian rocks contain great quantities of carbon, in the form of graphite or plumbago. This does not occur wholly, or even principally, in veins or fissures, but in the substance of the limestone and gneiss, and in regular layers. So abundant is it, that I have estimated the amount of carbon in one division of the Lower Laurentian of the Ottawa district at an aggregate thickness of not less than twenty to thirty feet, an amount comparable with that in the true coal formation itself. Now we know of no agency existing in present or in past geological time capable of deoxidising carbonic acid, and fixing its carbon as an ingredient in permanent rocks, except vegetable life. Unless, therefore, we suppose that there existed in the Laurentian age a vast abundance of vegetation, either in the sea or on the land, we have no means of explaining the Laurentian graphite.

The Laurentian formation contains great beds of oxide of iron, sometimes seventy feet in thickness. Here, again, we have an evidence of organic action; for it is the deoxidising power of vegetable matter which has in all the later formations been the efficient cause in producing bedded deposits of iron. . . ."—J. Dawson, *Salient Points in the Science of the Earth*, p. 107.

part elsewhere in the Sacred Writings is impossible. But the presumption is against it.

It has been suggested that the series in Genesis is in the order of the idea, not of time. An interesting elucidation of this thought is given by Dr. Griffith Thomas in his recent commentary on Genesis. We shall state it in his own words—

“It is noteworthy that in the Hebrew of verse 2 the adjectives ‘formless’ and ‘empty’ seem to be the key to the literary structure of the chapter. The record of the first three days refers to the heaven and earth receiving their ‘form,’ and the record of the last three days to the filling-up of their ‘emptiness.’ An outline will show this clearly:

‘FORMLESS’		‘EMPTY’	
First Day	. Light	Fourth Day	. Lights
„	. Air	„	. Fowls
Second Day	. Water	Fifth Day	. Fish
„	. Land	„	. Animals
Third Day	. Plants	Sixth Day	. Man

Thus, the first and fourth days correspond, the second and fifth, and the third and sixth. First comes ‘form,’ and then ‘fulness.’ The literary structure of the chapter is clear, and is one of many proofs of Hebrew parallelism and love of parallelistic structure.”

Probably, however, Dr. Driver is right when he says that the sacred writer conveys to us “in a series of *representative pictures*”<sup>1</sup> those truths of revelation which it was the will of God to communicate to men. Whether the first chapter of Genesis be the detailed description of

<sup>1</sup> *Sermons on the Old Testament*, p. 172.

a vision, as some have thought,<sup>1</sup> or be a poetic narration, as others suggest, need not concern us now. Evidently the course of nature during the long creative days<sup>2</sup> is set forth in a pictorial fashion as it was represented or might appear to a beholder. Darkness and light alternate: with each alternation the prospect is changed. Light spreads itself over the abyss; the waters draw back from the great continental masses. Elementary forms of life appear, the brooding vapours lift themselves above the earth, the enveloping clouds break, the skies clear, and the heavenly bodies are seen.<sup>3</sup> Vegetable life in its huge growths first attracts the eye; then animal life appears in gradational order. Thereafter falls a silence, broken by a counsel, an intervention, and man becomes a living soul. All this is in perfect agreement with science.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Driver objects to the vision hypothesis, upon grounds suggested by Delitzsch.

<sup>2</sup> The "days" are certainly not periods of twenty-four hours' duration, for (not to speak of the fact that the sun did not appear until the fourth day) they are measured merely by the pauses in a serial movement—*there was evening and there was morning, one day*. In the creation chapter there is no hint of the duration of these time-periods; but the ninetieth Psalm, entitled, "A Prayer of Moses, the Man of God," perhaps contains a suggestion of their vast scope: "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Compare "the day of grace," "the day of the Lord," etc.

<sup>3</sup> It seems hardly necessary to say that the author of this remarkable chapter did not make the mistake of supposing that life could maintain itself on earth before the creation of the sun. We ought to grant to the sacred writers at least an ordinary amount of common-sense. Whether we translate the first verb in verse sixteen 'made' or 'set' or 'appointed' (and there is no reason at all why we should not translate it 'appointed' if that rendering seems best to suit the sense), there can be no question that the writer, provided always that his narration is in the order of time, had in view not the *creation* but the *appearance* of the luminary.

Without committing ourselves to any of the particular interpretations of the creation narrative which are, or have been, in vogue,<sup>1</sup> it is enough to say that although that narrative is not expressed in scientific forms, and cannot without some sense of effort be brought into complete accord with our present knowledge of nature, we nevertheless have in it an entirely true statement of the creation, framed within certain primary ideas, of which the most important are the solitary efficiency of God and the orderly movement of existence up to man.

Out of the narrative which we have selected for illustration an important thought arises. When the Spirit of inspiration moves over regions which seem to belong peculiarly to science, the sacred writers, while they preserve their simplicity of speech and informality of expression, are not only shielded from error, but are led into an apprehension of truth far in advance of the opinions current in their day. The inspiration of the Almighty gives them understanding of the self-manifestation of the divine in nature, as well as in grace. In lower levels of the spirit we have analogies to this remarkable fact. A poet will outsoar the advance of science, and alight upon a region of truth which research, slow of step and heedful of its way, will not possess for decades still to come. It is said that

<sup>1</sup> A view which has had some currency but which seems to have no support in Scripture, and which does not approve itself to men of science, was advocated in this country many years ago by Dr. Thomas Chalmers. He suggested that the entire geological series falls between verses 1 and 2, and that what we are accustomed to call the creation narrative is merely the record of a restoration after some great catastrophe.

Jacob Boehme, the untaught shoemaker of Görlitz, foresaw, as with the vision of a seer, not a few scientific discoveries of the first importance. The creation-narrative in Genesis scintillates with momentary precognitions of what we may still call recent discoveries in physical science. To take a single text in evidence: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." How many discourses upon the relations of matter and force, and on the identity of radiant energy in all its forms, do these words suggest? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It has always been recognised, but with growing clearness in recent years, that there is in creation a principle of evolution. As we have already seen, that principle in its pureness has never been detected, and modern approximations to it do not concern us at this moment. There is, however, reason to believe that the sacred writers held clearly in their minds the conception of a process and progress of being.

In the first chapter of Genesis four words are used to express the divine activity—

(a) *Was brooding* (ver. 2, marg.). The suggestion appears to be—as a mother-bird brings forth her young from the egg. This is a process, not an act.

(b) *Said* (vers. 3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, etc.). Here act, fiat, is expressed. God spake, and it was.

(c) *Made* (vers. 7, 16, 25, etc.). Again there is process. Following upon, and conditioned by the fiat, there is, as it were, the fashioning of some plastic material.

(d) *Created* (vers. 1, 21, 27). This word seems to suggest intervention. The process is altered, its direction is changed, by a cause which the Spirit of inspiration assures us is the effect of the divine interposition. This word is used, it will be observed, of the first movement of creative activity, of the origination of sentient life, and of the introduction of man.

When we come to the appearance of man we find that the multiform process of the divine working is gathered up in him, the most excellent being upon earth, and the microcosm of the whole.

The first word, "was brooding," is a covering word, and affects the entire series. The second word, "said," is used in relation to man, but

in a way of eminence: "*God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness*"—the fiat rises to the consultative word. "Made" and "created," as we have seen, are also employed. But in the second chapter we are introduced to two new words which are carefully appropriated to the creation of man—"formed" and "breathed." "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). Whatever more these words signify, they at least make it plain that man, structurally and spiritually, stands in his own order, apart and alone. This is the teaching of inspiration; it is also the affirmation of science.

IX

*The Inspiration of the New Testament*

*“With such music on her lips the Old Testament Church expires, entering into night, full of dreams of the distant but approaching morn. And the New Testament Church emerges into day, conscious of a personal identity with the Old, and claims to have the same consciousness, but now higher and better informed. And it utters such words as these: ‘God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son.’ God has been speaking, and through all the ages. It is a historic process: to the fathers, bit by bit, and in many ways, and mediately by the prophets; to us, immediately by a Son, and in the fulness and finality of truth.”*

A. B. DAVIDSON.



## IX

### *The Inspiration of the New Testament*

IN His sacramental discourses the Lord intimated not obscurely the formation in course of years of a body of Christian literature similar to the Scriptures of the Old Testament. It was to be given by inspiration of the Comforter; and its theme was to be the glory of Christ.

The words, "He shall glorify Me; for He shall take of Mine, and shall declare it unto you," describe the contents of this series of writings. As we examine the prediction more closely, we see that the Scriptures of the New Testament arrange themselves in three classes, according to the diverse operations of the inspiring Spirit—

1. "He shall bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you,"—these words suggest the Four Gospels.

2. "When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all the truth,"—in these words the Acts and the Epistles, the progress of the Church and the development of doctrine, are foreshadowed.

3. "He shall declare unto you the things that are to come,"—these words announce an Apocalypse of

Jesus Christ, in which the beloved John will write "the things which shall come to pass hereafter."

## I

"He shall bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" is a promise which especially applies to the work of the evangelists. When uttered, the promise was addressed not to the four, but to the eleven. Its first incidence is on the apostolic tradition. A true "teaching of the apostles" is guaranteed. But, passing onward, it embraces the evangelical records which have been transmitted to us.

1. First of all, it includes a precise and particular honesty in the narration of our Lord's words and deeds. The presence in power of the Holy Spirit delivers the will from bias, the mind from superstition, the imagination from love of display. It unites the heart to fear the name of the Lord. Of the first three evangelists Luke alone discloses his literary method; but the accurate recital which it secured is certainly paralleled in the First and Second Gospels. This, then, is the first "moment" in the inspiration of the Gospels, and it is of the greatest possible consequence.

2. The gift of the Spirit, in the measure in which it exalts the Saviour, reduces the self-assertiveness of the evangelists. The facts which they relate are never qualified by personal predilections. The foolishness, dulness, waywardness, ambition which characterised their discipleship are all set down with perfect simplicity. Through purified minds they transmit the facts of the

Great Biography, as an unflawed crystal transmits the light. We read without any sense of strangeness the artless narratives which report our Lord's wonder at the feebleness of His disciples' faith, His loneliness in their presence, their slumber while His agony endured, their cowardice at the Garden gate when they all forsook Him and fled. Their repression of natural feeling is even more instructive. The individual sentiment broadens into universality as they stand beneath the cross. Passion and anger die. Hatred and revenge find no place. The majesty of the mysterious transaction which is being accomplished before their troubled eyes overawes them: it is an act of Deity, an expression of Godhead love,—He who is hanging on the Roman cross is the Redeemer of a lost world. This self-suppression in the presence of great spiritual realities is one most patent proof of the inspiration of the men to whom was committed the task of recording those stupendous events.

3. And when the record is complete, we see imaged in it in excellent glory that countenance which, as the sun, shineth in its strength. The portrait of the Son of Man is the perfect evidence of inspiration. The Christ of the four evangelists is one—the four-fold representation is accordant in a perfect harmony. And the unity is a marvel beyond the wisdom of man to contrive, beyond the skill of man to execute. It is the work of God; it is the transcription of the true.

The essential difference between the first three Gospels and the Fourth is patent to the most casual

reader. The facts recorded are supplementary in the case of the latter; the words of our Lord are set, apparently, on a higher key; the motive of the whole is different. Yet the portrait is one. That which the eyes of the disciples saw, and their ears heard, and their hands handled of the Word of Life they have declared to us. They beheld His glory, full of grace and truth, and the evangelical records are the testimony of that which was made known to them in the illumination of the Divine Spirit.

The Synoptists place before their minds the thesis which they wish, most particularly, to impress upon their readers—that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah of Israel. The beloved disciple instructs his “little children” that the Prophet of Galilee is the eternal Son. But John also writes as a Jew, clothing his relation in terms of the covenant with Abraham and his seed; and, on the other hand, the earlier evangelists see, beyond the borders of “the pleasant land,” the nations who sit in darkness and dumbly wait for the promised light. To illustrate this would be to recapitulate the Gospels. The simple sayings of our Lord recorded by the Synoptists, no less than the profound utterances preserved by John, look out on infinity. In all the Gospels the Person of Christ is the object of faith, His work the means of salvation, His words the only rule of life, His moral decisions the judgment of the Most High. To take only one passage (Matt. xi. 27; cf. Luke x. 22), we find not in John but in the Synoptists the formal and public discovery of what Bishop Moorhouse justly styles the master-thought

of Christ's teaching, "the central truth which He came to declare to the world."

## II

"He shall teach you all things; He shall guide you into all the truth": this is the particular promise given to those who were afterwards chosen to outline (a) the progress of the Church of the first days, and (b) the development of doctrine in the New Testament.

(a) The author of the Acts makes no direct claim to inspiration, except as that may be involved in his possession with all saints of the Spirit of truth. But the proof stands out on every page of his treatise. He speaks as from intimate knowledge of the mind and procedure of the Holy Spirit.

He records how the one hundred and twenty at Pentecost, and the gathered Church at a later date, "were all filled with the Holy Ghost"; how Stephen was "full of faith and power," and how, "being full of the Holy Ghost, he looked up steadfastly to heaven, and saw the glory of God"; how the Samaritan believers, Saul of Tarsus, the household of Cornelius, the Church in Antioch, and the disciples in Ephesus received the Spirit; how at Antioch the Holy Ghost said, "Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them," and how they "being sent forth by the Holy Ghost departed"; how the Spirit presided in the Council of Jerusalem; how He hedged up Paul's way that he should not preach the word in Asia, nor "go into Bithynia,"

and how the Spirit witnessed in many places of the bonds and imprisonments which were awaiting the great apostle as he journeyed up to Jerusalem. These and other references to the viewless efficiency of the Divine Breath betray a spiritual enlightenment which fills the consciousness of the writer. A direct apprehension of the purposes and movements of that Holy One is a clear proof of inspiration.

(*b*) The first impulse to the writing of apostolic epistles to the infant Church came from Paul; and the major part of the Epistles preserved in the New Testament is from his pen.

The Apostle to the Gentiles was not a disciple of men. His gospel was ministered to him by the Lord Jesus. His formula is: That which I received of the Lord, I have delivered unto you. Cephas, James, and John added nothing to him. In his unregenerate days he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, exceeding zealous for the righteousness of God, and personally blameless. After he had seen the Lord, he carried the new-found gospel to Mount Sinai, "which is in Arabia," that, among the granite peaks of the mountain of the fiery law, he might harmonise the teaching of Moses and of Christ. The reconciliation was wrought in his own experience, in heart-throb and brain-thrill. Every fibre of his being became responsive to the truth, "as the truth is in Jesus." In Gamaliel's school he had been a keen debater. Henceforth his logic is worked out in emotion and passion. His argumentative thinking is wet with tears, and stained with blood. The gospel

is his own,—“my gospel,” he calls it. It is his life's history, the record of what Jesus of Nazareth had done for one Saul of Tarsus, formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious, but now, by the grace of God, an apostle.

In the mid-time of his course the Lord was pleased to lead him into a deeper experience of the power of the risen Christ. And in his prison Epistles he traces, in the individual believer and in the Church, that process of Christ which had come to pass in himself—crucified with Christ, buried with Him, raised with Him, seated with Him, triumphing in Him, enriched in Him, glorified with Him—“Blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ.” Is it any wonder that he claims to have the full assurance of faith, of hope, and of understanding; or that he should with unhesitating sternness declare, “If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema”?

But to particularise: one may detect three strata in the teaching of Paul. First, he reaffirms the doctrine of Christ (1 Cor. vii. 10), and of the Old Testament (1 Cor. ix. 8). Second, he draws necessary inferences from the remembered, but not yet recorded, sayings of Jesus (1 Cor. xiv. 37). Third, he adduces certain considerations based on the revelation already received and confessed (1 Cor. vii. 25). And in all cases he is possessed with the conviction that his utterance is the word of Christ (2 Cor. xiii. 3), given in those forms of expression which are communicated by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. ii. 13).

If we examine next the Epistle of James we are impressed by the tone of authority which the writer assumes, as it were unconsciously, and by the vibrant note of certainty in which he communicates to the tribes of the Dispersion the truth of the gospel. But he makes no *direct* claim to inspiration.

Jude also is silent with reference to his personal authority, but he lifts "the words which have been spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ" to the level of the Old Testament Scriptures (ver. 17).

John, as his habit is, differs from all the rest. He begins with the assertion of his personal and first-hand knowledge of those things which have become the material of faith: "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life." This testimony he communicates with the assurance of perfect certitude: "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not." And the witness thus communicated is received with an equal firmness of conviction: "The anointing which ye received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any one teach you; but as His anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in Him." The apostle and his readers alike possess "the witness of the truth."

The recognition of the inspirational authority of Simon Peter, again, is different. At Cæsarea Philippi



the experience of a life laid under the guidance of the divine hand created, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, the full assurance of faith: "We have believed, and know that Thou art the Holy One of God." At Pentecost, Simon Peter, being clothed with the Spirit's power, so spake that a great multitude believed. Afterwards it was by the manifest direction of the Spirit that he came to know that the ways of Christianity and Judaism must thenceforth lie apart (Acts iv. 11, 19, v. 29), and that the grace of Christ was destined to have free course among all nations (Acts ix. 15-18).

In his Epistles Peter designates himself "an apostle of Jesus Christ." He reminds his readers that the first heralds of the Cross preached the gospel with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (1 Pet. i. 12), and that the word thus preached had a creative energy and an eternal validity (i. 23, 25). For himself he claims, not merely apostolic authority, but also the direct knowledge of an eye-witness, and the assurance of one to whom nothing can be more certain than the truth entrusted to his testimony (v. 1, 12). In his second Epistle (iii. 2) he places in a position of perfect equality "the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets," and "the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles."

### III

"He shall declare unto you the things that are to come."

The Apocalypse is essentially prophecy (i. 3, x. 7,

11, xxii. 6, 7, 18, 19); it finds its close counterpart in the Book of Daniel. It is "the revelation of Jesus Christ which God gave Him, to show unto His servants even the things which must shortly come to pass: and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John." The source of the revelation is the goodwill of the Father; it is mediated through the Son; it is delivered by an angel. The seer receives the divine apocalypse in an ecstasy, or trance, similar to that which fell on Isaiah (vi. 1), Ezekiel (i. 1), Daniel (viii. 2), Zechariah (iv. 1). Four times in succession he records the fact of his being in, or rather of his entrance into, the Spirit (i. 10, iv. 2, xvii. 3, xxi. 10). With each new rapture a new vision is disclosed. In the first, he beholds the glorified form of the risen Redeemer; in the second, he is permitted to gaze on the throne and presence of God; in the third, the mystery of iniquity unrolls itself under his astonished glance; in the fourth, the pure splendours of the final state are unveiled. In each case we may suppose that the transformation of the mental vision may have appeared to the seer as if it were a new awakening—an experience similar perhaps to that of Zechariah: "And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep." In general, the revelation is conveyed by means of the witnessing angel (i. 1); but again and again the utterances of the Spirit break the stillness of eternity, mingling now with the sayings of Christ (ii. 7, 11, 17, 29, iii. 6, 13, 22), now with the yearnings of the Church (xiv. 13, xxii. 17), now with the voice of God

(iv. 5). Frequently the Spirit, refraining from self-witness, enables us to hear the immediate utterance of Christ, as in that high attestation which the exalted Saviour confers on the words of this prophecy: "And he said unto me, These words are faithful and true: and the Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly come to pass. And behold, I come quickly. Blessed is he that keepeth the words of the prophecy of this book" (xxii. 6, 7).

It is instructive to observe that the claim to inspiration is enforced with less directness in the New Testament than in the Old. Of this fact there may be more than one explanation. Something, of course, must be allowed for the informal nature of many of the New Testament writings. The Epistles, especially, are the free outpouring of affection. But a deeper reason may lie in the difference of the Spirit's presence before and after Pentecost. Before the donation of the Spirit He "came upon" the believer, afterwards He "abode" in him. In the pre-pentecostal age, therefore, the Spirit, "coming upon" the witness to divine truth, stirred the nature, often with vehemence, to its depths. It was so also when the promise of the Father was first bestowed: the disciples were as men intoxicated with new wine. But when the Spirit had come to "abide," the subject of His gracious operation was brought so profoundly under His sway, was made partaker of so many spiritual gifts, that the particular endowment of inspiration did not so distinctly impress itself upon his attention. Inspiration was only one

manifestation—a marvellous and potent manifestation, we confess—of the indwelling Spirit.

It may also be that in this we have an example of the divine economy which obtains alike in nature and in grace: God never grants more than the occasion requires. The more spiritual, therefore, any section of Scripture is, the less necessary is it that its inspirational value should be directly attested. Such portions of the Holy Word shine, like the sun, by their own light.

X

*The Self-Witness of the Scriptures*

*“The Jews’ frontispiece to their great Bible is that saying of Jacob upon the vision of God that he had at Bethel, ‘How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ So ought we to look upon the word, with a holy awe and reverence of the presence of God in it.”*

JOHN OWEN.

## X

### *The Self-Witness of the Scriptures*

THE Scriptures evidence themselves to be the Word of God by two distinguishing marks: they bear the divine signature; and they accomplish the work to which the Father has appointed them.

The divine signature is on every page: "Thus saith the Lord God"; "The word of the Lord came unto me, saying"; "The Holy Ghost saith"; "The mouth of the Lord hath spoken." Jesus Christ also, who came into the world to bear witness to the truth, countersigned the writings of the Old Testament: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail." He established His own word upon divine authority: "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice." And He added an incontrovertible warrant to the Scriptures of the New Testament, as yet unwritten: "The words which Thou gavest Me I have given them"—divine words directed through a divine mediary.

Not only is the divine autograph clearly legible upon the page of Scripture; the writing itself is (to use a lawyer's term) holograph: the hand of God is seen in it throughout. "The heavenliness of the

matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it doth abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God."

This divine testimony is confirmed by the gracious energy which has been diffused from the Holy Writings in each successive generation since the first pages of the Book of God were penned—

This book's fruit is plain,  
Nor miracles need prove it any more.

It has broken the prison bars, and led the captives into light. It has illumined the darkness of death, and dried the mourner's tears. It has healed wounded hearts, redeemed sinful souls, and calmed the tempest-shaken. It has lifted base men into pureness and love. It has changed savage nations into a people of holiness. It has girdled the round earth with the praise of God.

It is the former of these distinguishing marks that is the subject of this chapter,—*the Scriptures bear the divine signature*. Yet with this we must always associate *the divine efficacy of the Word*. "What sayest Thou of Thyself? What hast Thou done?" were questions which were addressed to Christ—the one interrogation involving the other. Thus our knowledge of the mighty and gracious doings of the



Scriptures gives authority to their self-attestation. The history of the Book is its most satisfying credential, its first line of defence. Having approved itself by its vital efficacy, the Bible proceeds to invite us to consider its claims. "What sayest Thou of Thyself?" then becomes a natural and necessary question.

The answer of the Bible is that it is a divine communication. It is unnecessary to remind our readers that thousands of times within the comparatively brief compass of the Scriptures the sacred writers pledge their veracity on the statement that they wrote by the mouth of God. Dr. James H. Brookes of St. Louis has been at pains to count the separate testimonies of the written Word to its divine origin. He informs us that such expressions as "God said," "the Lord spake, saying," "the Lord commanded," "the word of the Lord," occur 680 times in the Pentateuch, 418 times in the Historical Books, and 1307 times in the Prophets—not to speak of the reiterated attribution to God of the burden of the Poetical Books, and not including at all the New Testament. Here, one might think, the controversy regarding the inspiration of Scripture should be laid to rest. This stupendous fact is unexampled in the history of the world.<sup>1</sup> This book, which has given light and salvation to the world, which bears on its front truth so spirit-compelling and purity so convincing that the holiest men on earth have been plunged

<sup>1</sup> Hammurabi's reference of the laws of Chaldea to the wisdom of an inspiring deity, or Mohammed's claim for the Koran, that it was given by divine dictation, are in no respect parallel.

by its revelation into the depths of humiliation, and have then been lifted up from the ashes of contrition into those heavenly regions where Christ sitteth,—this book says, more than 3000 times, and with the most solemn intonation, *and everything that we know confirms the claim*, that it has come from God. "What need we any further witness?"

The Book of Leviticus was appropriately named by the Jews, from its opening word, "Vayyikra," "And He (the Lord) called." The covering statement prefixed to the long line of ritual enactments is, "And the Lord called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the tent of meeting, saying." And each one of the thirty-six sections into which the book is divided is prefaced by a similar announcement. It would seem impossible for words to make more evident the attribution of this book to its Divine Author. Nearly 200 times within the compass of its twenty-seven chapters the authority of Jehovah is asserted in this ancient code. As we shall see, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews accepted these statements precisely as they stand.

The prophet Jeremiah asserts more than 500 times<sup>1</sup> that the words which he uttered were communicated to him by the Living God. In the thirtieth chapter, to take a single instance, we have these words: "The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book." Here we have *a triple asseveration*,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Brookes, *God spake all these Words*, p. 76.

affirming the divine origin of the thirtieth and thirty-first chapters; and within these chapters we have no fewer than thirty reaffirmations of the fact that it was God who uttered the words recorded by Jeremiah.

In two short chapters Haggai declares more than twenty times that he spoke to Israel from the mouth of the Lord. With proper feeling Dr. George Adam Smith animadverts on the dimness of intellectual vision evidenced by those who speak of the style of Haggai as destitute of life and power, and who deride the narrow scope of his exhortations. "The sneers of modern writers have not been spared upon a style that is crabbed and jejune, and they have esteemed this to be a collapse of the prophetic spirit, in which Haggai ignored all the achievements of prophecy, and interpreted the word of God as only a call to hew wood and lay stone upon stone. But the man felt what the moment needed, and that is the supreme mark of the prophet. Set a prophet there, and what else could a prophet have done?" Let us suppose—though we have no reason at all to believe that it was so—that Haggai had a narrow outlook upon life, and was possessed of a meagre intellectual furnishing, is it not quite according to the analogy of grace that God should work as veritably in the mind and through the experience of such a one as in the case of others more richly endowed? And is it not at least possible that the very recognition of his own limitations would lead him the more earnestly to crave the aid of the Holy Spirit, and the more readily to perceive His presence in power? Certainly, it is in some such way as this

that we must interpret the reiterated insistence by all the prophets of the fact of inspiration. The fire of God was in the bones of His messengers; His word was on their tongue. The divine announcement came to them as a mandate which it was impossible not to communicate to those to whom it was addressed. If a prophet should desire to refrain from speech he was all but powerless to do so: he became weary with forbearing, and could not stay. Utterance was almost an automatic act: "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

An interesting field of research on which we cannot even enter now is the manner in which each writer serves himself heir to the words and doctrine of his predecessors. Sometimes an important passage is transferred bodily from one prophecy to another (compare Isaiah ii. 2-4 with Micah iv. 1-3). Sometimes a conception is borrowed, with some trifling difference of detail in expression; again, it is carried on to fuller statement, and is set more clearly in the light of Messiah's countenance. At other times a mere suggestion of an earlier oracle arrests us: a familiar word of prophecy is taken into fresh relations, adapted to new occasions, and presented in an unwonted form. But always, in each successive portion of Scripture, the Holy Spirit honours His own testimony.

The growth of "the volume of the book" may be traced in Scripture. Almost contemporaneously with the deliverance from Egypt we find Moses recording in

a book the loving-kindnesses of the Lord (Ex. xvii. 14). Under Mount Sinai he "wrote all the words of the Lord" (Ex. xxiv. 4). At a later time he again wrote down at the mouth of the Lord the provisions of the covenant (Ex. xxxiv. 27). The ceremonial law contained in Leviticus was communicated by God, and has the divine authentication affixed to it in these words: "These are the commandments which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in Mount Sinai." By a series of similar announcements we are prepared for the warning which contemplates the law as already fully given in written form: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you" (Deut. iv. 2). The words of the covenant are to be taught diligently to the little children, and are to be inscribed on the posts and gates of every Hebrew home (Deut. vi. 6-9). And it is enacted that when a king shall sit upon the throne in Israel "he shall write him a copy of this law in a book, out of that which is before the priests the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes to do them" (Deut. xvii. 18). The greater part of Deuteronomy consists of a series of inspired reflections on the law already committed to Israel. When these reflections were completed they too were written down, and became law: "And it came to pass, when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book,

until they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying, Take this book of the law, and put it by the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee" (Deut. xxxi. 24-26). When Moses, the man of God, was dead, the Lord spoke to Joshua, his successor, charging him to be strong and very courageous, to observe to do according to all the law which Moses had enjoined, adding, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein" (Josh. i. 7, 8). Nor did the book end with the completion of the law. We find Samuel writing in a book "the manner of the kingdom," and when it was finished it was laid up "before the Lord," doubtless beside the books of Moses, "in the sides of the ark" (1 Sam. x. 25). Writing long afterwards, the Chronicler refers to "the history of Samuel the seer" (1 Chron. xxix. 29), and to "the book of the kings of Israel" (1 Chron. ix. 1). The Psalter is full of an overflowing love and veneration for the law of the Lord. The just man finds in it his delight, meditating therein day and night (i. 2); the words of the Lord are acknowledged to be "pure words, as silver tried in a furnace, . . . purified seven times" (xii. 6); "By the word of Thy lips," says a tempted believer, "I have kept me from the ways of the violent" (xvii. 4); another rejoices over the unsurpassed excellence of the holy word which is "true and righteous altogether" (xix. 7-9). Psalm after psalm tells the same tale, until we

reach the hundred and nineteenth, which, "in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of the Lord,"<sup>1</sup> lifts us up and bears us forth, as on the bosom of some great sea. The Book of Proverbs reiterates the injunction of Moses, which distinguishes the sacred writings from other literature (Prov. xxx. 5, 6). In the days of Isaiah "the law and the testimony" were an unquestioned authority in regard to all matters of conduct (Isa. viii. 16-20). By the mouth of the prophet Hosea, Jehovah speaks of having written for the guidance of Israel the "ten thousand precepts" of His law (Hos. viii. 12). By the divine command, Jeremiah recorded his prophecies (Jer. xxv. 13, xxx. 2). Daniel, searching the prophecies of Jeremiah, "understood by the books" the duration of the captivity; he was further instructed by the angel in "that which is inscribed in the writing of truth"; and with reference to his own prophecies he was charged to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end."<sup>2</sup>

Hitherto we have spoken only of the Old Testament. The witness of the New Testament to the Old is so copious that we can give only a general description.

In the first place, we may observe the witness of the New Testament writers to the Messianic predictions

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin, *Fors Clavigera*.

<sup>2</sup> In His promise of the advent of the Comforter, our Lord, as we have seen, framed His words to express the characters of the several parts of the New Testament. Simon Peter ranks the Epistles of his "beloved brother Paul" with the Scriptures of the Old Testament (2 Pet. iii. 16). And the disciple of love affixes the seal of finality to the Apocalypse (Rev. xxii. 18, 19).

of the earlier volume. This is, of course, the witness of the Master, for those three years of companionship with His chosen apostles were, so to speak, a long Emmaus journey, in which, "beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, He interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." The constantly recurring words, "That it might be fulfilled," indicate the chosen path of the Man of Sorrows—chosen because appointed—as an unbroken line of posts across a snow-swept hill marks out the road. Thus it was written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer and to enter into His glory. It may be that the prophets themselves did not perfectly comprehend the words which became as waymarks and beacons to the Messiah. Travellers relate that one may occasionally see, in a mountainous country, lofty and distant summits mirrored in a lake lying at one's feet, although those white crests are not in the direct line of sight, and therefore are themselves invisible. The Apostle Peter has a pathetic description of those ancient heralds of the cross, bending over the prophecies, their own and those of their fellows, "searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them." Nor was their eager search unrewarded: "To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Ghost sent forth from heaven." The Spirit was the same: His message was one.



Not to dwell on this point, however, let us pass to a second illustration of the direct and uncompromising fashion in which the apostolic writers testified to the inspiration and authority of the Old Testament.

Let us examine the testimony conveyed by the Epistle to the Hebrews to the law of Moses.

Three facts in particular may be noted—

(a) First, that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews accepts the Old Testament account of the life and times of Moses as historical throughout.

Here are some of the facts of which he reminds us, and to which he adds endorsement.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible. By faith he kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood. By faith he passed through the Red Sea as by dry land. He led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and brought them to the Mount that burned with fire. He spake concerning the priesthood. And when he had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, and sprinkled all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you." He was admonished by God regarding the construction of the Tabernacle, "See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the Mount." Moreover, he sprinkled with blood both the Tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And, in brief, Moses was faithful in all God's house.

(b) The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews does not merely assume the reliability of the sacred narrative in relation to Moses; but, having assumed it, he proceeds to build upon it. And what he rears is the doctrine of redemption.

So far from admitting that the Tabernacle of the wilderness wandering was merely the invention of the historian, "the embodiment of a sublime idea," he alleges that it was at once a great historical fact, and a significant spiritual reality. The levitical ceremonial was not elaborated in "the vision-chamber" of some old writer's "imagination"; it was of divine origination. The tent of meeting and its ritual were designed by the Spirit of all grace to mirror Christ, to illustrate and expound His atoning work, and to lead the worshipper to a personal appropriation of redemption and its benefits. They were "copies and shadows of heavenly things," "figures for the time then present," "patterns of things in the heavens," "figures of the true," "shadows of things to come." Arguing, therefore, from this designed correspondence, the apostle establishes the plenary satisfaction and propitiatory worth of the death accomplished on Golgotha.

"For, if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: *how much more* shall the blood of Christ . . . cleanse your conscience from dead works?" (ix. 13, 14).

"And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shed-

ding of blood there is no remission. *It was necessary, therefore,* that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (ix. 22, 23).

"For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest as an offering for sin, are burned without the camp. *Wherefore Jesus also,* that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered without the gate" (xiii. 11, 12).

The plain purpose of this Epistle is to show that grace has run in one clear stream from the gates of Eden, through the Wilderness of the Wandering, by Shiloh and Moriah, and, having passed the Cross, is about to flow with more abundant tides even to earth's utmost limit. The covenant is eternal; the spirit of worship is unchanged; the ministration of redemption is not departed. There is one way; there is one life; there is one Christ. And it is evident that the entire argument of the apostle requires not only faith in the historicity of the record, but the positive assurance that the ritual provisions which have been received from the hand of Moses are of divine ordination.

(c) We may now advance another step. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews claims, in the most direct manner, the authority of God for that earlier record on which he builds his thesis.

The Epistle opens with the announcement that the earlier revelation was communicated by God. The ultimate revelation is clearer, fuller than all precedent

ones, but its authority is not greater: God, who spake unto the fathers in the prophets, hath spoken unto us in His Son. In each successive dispensation, "God spake."

There are in this Epistle twelve direct citations from the five books of Moses, and thirty-three distinct allusions to these writings. There are also a number of references to other Scriptures which themselves presuppose the truthfulness and divine authority of the Pentateuch.

In this Epistle the quotations from the Old Testament are (with one apparent exception) given as if they were anonymous. In each case God is presented as the speaker. And not only so, but the tense employed is, in general, the present: the formula is, "He saith." He who spoke through the lips of the prophets still speaks from the printed page. After the lapse of generations, after the flight of centuries, the words of Scripture are *living and active* (Heb. iv. 12).

In three separate instances the words quoted are the words of Moses: in the Epistle to the Hebrews these are asserted to be the words of God.

The New Testament writer confirms the statement of the Old Testament narrator, that it was God who laid upon Moses the charge that he should execute, according to the pattern which had been shown him in the Mount, those arrangements which entered into the ceremonial worship of the Old Covenant. And an expository note is affixed to the mention of one detail (illustrative of many), *The Holy Ghost this signifying.*

In this Epistle the authorship of the ninety-fifth Psalm is attributed to God: *He saith in David*. And the author of the Epistle renews the pungent exhortation of the Psalmist with the solemn preface: *The Holy Ghost saith*. But the ninety-fifth Psalm asserts that the children of Israel actually passed through the experience related in the books of Moses, and reiterates the charge that when they rejected the authority of Moses they despised the voice of God.

The prophet Jeremiah had referred to the Mosaic covenant, and elucidated the spiritual meaning of its provisions. He certainly held the record to be true. And the author of this Epistle reaffirms his judgment, adding the profoundly significant words: *The Holy Ghost is a witness to us*.

Thus, not only are the main outlines of the story of Moses retraced by this New Testament writer; not only are the course of the history and the development of religion attributed to the wise and gracious interposition of God; not only is the presiding mind in all the legislative enactments of the Exodus or the Wandering declared to be the mind of Christ: but the record itself—if we may confide in the inspirational authority of this Epistle—is divinely authenticated.

But the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews on this point is entirely accordant to the witness of the consentient apostolic company and the unerring testimony of the Lord. We need not particularise. The whole New Testament, from the annunciation by Gabriel to the great uplifting of the song of Moses and the Lamb, is one gleaming tissue of gold, inwrought with

the colours of the house of Levi—blue, and purple, and scarlet. Occasionally a biblical scholar, with less than becoming reverence, dissents from an expression made use of by an individual apostle. But no believer in the inspiration of Scripture will challenge the harmonious witness of the New Testament, the unbroken consent of its writers.

Our acceptance of the recently prevailing critical estimate of the books of Moses cannot but affect our faith in the New Testament. Professor Estlin Carpenter, for example, says: "The methods of Christian *gnosis* employed by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, while perfectly natural to his age, can no longer control our modes of thought. Least of all can they be ascribed to the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup> This is explicit and frank. But in discarding the teaching of the disciple it disowns the doctrine of the Master. And so we come back to that pregnant saying of his: "For if ye believed Moses, ye would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe My words?" (John v. 46, 47).

One other illustration must suffice—the treatment of unfulfilled, or partially fulfilled, prophecies by the Seer of the Apocalypse.

To enumerate these quotations and allusions would be impossible within our space. We shall restrict ourselves to those that are contained in the last two chapters; and even with regard to them we must be content to instance a few examples of correspondence or corroboration out of many.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Clarke, *The Use of the Scriptures in Theology*, p. 116.

From these chapters we reach back to the beginning. Creation is to be restored: a new heaven and a new earth are to be brought to sight (Isa. lxx. 10, 17). Paradise is to be regained: a sinless garden, where no serpent tempts and where intercourse with God is never interrupted, is once again the home of the blessed. The tree of life is in the midst of the garden; its leaves bring healing, its fruits never fade (Ezek. xlvii. 12). The fourfold river of Eden was quickly lost to view in the wilderness of this world: from the mountains of prevision the prophets caught a distant gleam of its bright waters—they saw it issuing, as a fountain of life, from under the threshold of the Lord's house; they traced its course as it flowed through the glad city of God; and as it swept out into the waste places beyond they marked the deserts begin to blossom as the rose (Zech. xiv. 8; Ps. xlvii. 4; Ezek. xlvii. 1-12).

The Paradise state was transient. Men soon began to gather into communities. The first city was built, for purposes of defence, probably by Cain, on whom the curse had fallen to the uttermost. God's city, though founded in the eternal decree, was later in its manifestation. Abraham saw that city framed within the day of Christ, and seeing it was glad. "This is My rest," said Jehovah of Zion, "here will I dwell." Through the symbol of the earthly Jerusalem Isaiah foresaw "the holy city" which should come down from God out of heaven. Of that city the Lord was to be the everlasting light. Its gates were to be open continually, for there would be no night there. Within the circuit

of its walls no temple would find place, for the forms of religion would then be lost in the immediateness of the Divine Presence. The borders of that city were to be of pleasant stones, its foundations were to be of sapphires, its windows of agates. God would wipe away tears from off all faces, for the rebuke of His people would then be taken away: the curse would be no more (Heb. xi. 10; Ps. cxxxii. 14; Isa. lii. 1, lx. 19, 10; John iv. 23; Isa. liv. 11, 12, xxv. 8; Zech. xiv. 11).

In that state of blessedness the tabernacle ritual receives its last explanation (Lev. xxvi. 10, 12); the terrible crystal which the elders of Israel saw in the Mount reappears in the throne of God (Ex. xxiv. 10); the stones of the priestly breastplate flash again among the foundations of the holy city (Ex. xxviii. 17-20). The marriage covenant of God with Israel, sealed in the blood of the paschal lamb, confirmed by countless holocausts, celebrated by psalmists and seers, is brought at length to fruition; "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready" (Jer. ii. 3; Ps. xlv; Canticles; Isa. lxii. 5).

Even at the close of the Gospel dispensation the prophecies relating to Christ have not fulfilled their significance. He is still the Star out of Jacob (Num. xxiv. 17), He is still the Rod out of the stem of Jesse (Isa. xi. 1). The word of the Cross is re-echoed from the Throne (Rev. xxi. 6), and the pleadings and invitations of the Gospels still resound through the rolling thunders of "the last time." The restful assurance of the upper room, "If I go and prepare a place for you,



I will come again," is changed into the advent cry, "Yea: I come quickly." And so "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" dies into the rapture of the rending heavens and the returning Christ.

At midnight, at cock-crow, at morning, one certain day,  
The Bridegroom will come, and will not delay;  
Watch thou, and pray.

XI

*The Four-fold Portrait*

*“The time is near when critics will trouble themselves little about questions of literary history in relation to early Christianity, because the essential accuracy of tradition, with few noteworthy exceptions, will be universally admitted.”*

ADOLF HARNACK.

## XI

### *The Four-fold Portrait*

LORD TENNYSON once asked Mr. G. F. Watts, the painter, to convey to him his idea of true portraiture. The answer is preserved in "The Idylls of the King"—

As when a painter, poring on a face  
Divinely, through all hindrance finds the man  
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,  
The shape and colour of a mind and life,  
Lives for his children, even at its best.

If we acknowledge the justice of this description we shall not expect to see the portrait of Christ adequately realised in art. A painter's brush may discriminate virtues, but it cannot transfer to the canvas those mysterious gleams of indwelling Deity which, to the eye of faith, suffused the countenance of our blessed Lord.

The portrait of Jesus lives for us in the four-fold Gospel.

The first three evangelists wrote under a similar, and, possibly, an almost simultaneous impulse. The Fourth Gospel was designed to meet a later need. By common consent, therefore, the first three Gospels

are grouped in one class; and the Fourth Gospel thus stands alone.

The first three Gospels are called synoptical: they occupy related points of view; and with innumerable differences in detail have a general similarity of plan.

The Apostolic Tradition, which originated in Jerusalem under the opened skies of Pentecost (Acts ii. 42), had probably crystallised into a perfect form when the persecution which arose in connection with the martyrdom of Stephen scattered the believers and swept many of them into the lands of the Gentiles. Up to that point tradition had been consentient, and the Church was one. From that date a variety of circumstances and a diversity of operations threatened a divergence of doctrine within the Christian Society. So far as the authorised spokesmen of the Church were concerned, this distinction never turned to discord; but prejudiced or partially instructed believers not infrequently became eager partisans, saying, "I am of Christ, and I of Cephas, and I of Paul, and I of Apollos."

As we read the Acts of the Apostles we note that, after the scattering of the Church in the first persecution, three variant lines of religious development appear. First of all there is the continued adherence to the Temple and to the ritual law. As yet the Jerusalem believers, while they recognised the liberty of others, did not personally feel free to discontinue observances which had come down from the fathers, and which had been honoured by the Lord. Extremists might turn the known conformity of Jesus to the

levitical code into a faction cry, "I am of Christ," but until the destruction of the Temple broke the entail of the past, many conscientious Christians seem to have nourished their new life within the forms of the ancient faith.

Some twelve years after the resurrection Simon Peter was chosen to open the door of faith to the Gentiles. And by that election he was pressed out into a wider outlook upon the purpose of the Master. Occasionally, as at Antioch, he fell back on the earlier and narrower conception of the Church, but in general he maintained a position which might be quite clearly distinguished from that of which James, the Lord's brother, was the leading representative. This is the second phase, and it is usually connected with the name and influence of Simon Peter.

A year or two after Peter had been privileged to welcome the Gentiles into the family of God, Paul and Barnabas went forth under the direction of the Spirit into "regions beyond." The new circumstances into which the great apostle was led, and the necessities of Church-life which sprang from them, in turn led him into a clear recognition of Christianity as a religion of the Spirit, which must inevitably disentangle itself from the Hebrew ritual that was quickly becoming, to Jew and Gentile alike, a "yoke of bondage." It became the effort of his life to secure and confirm this position.

Here, then, are three phases of the development of Christianity, distinct but not discordant. We may name them after the leading exponents of each—the

Jacobine, the Petrine, and the Pauline. And out of the heart of each of these developments we receive one of the Synoptic Gospels. The Jacobine form of Christianity yields us the Gospel according to Matthew; the Petrine, Mark's Gospel; the Pauline, the Gospel by Luke. There is no hint of "tendency writing"—all is simple, unartificial, uncoloured—but the chief distinction of each of the synoptical narratives arises out of the situation from which each in turn emerged.

The First Gospel is the Gospel of the Hebrew: it discloses the Messiah—Law-giver, Prophet, King. The Second is the Gospel of the Gentile-influenced Jew: it was written under the shadow of the world-empire of Rome; it has for its theme the wonder-working Servant of the Lord. The Third is the Gospel of the nations: it lays bare the heart of humanity, and reveals the Son of Man.

The Fourth Gospel appears to have been written when the first century was drawing near to its close. It is practically certain that the records of the three synoptists were familiarly known to the author of the Fourth Gospel. From time to time he seems to wish to make quite clear something that they have briefly recorded; at other times he judges their narration to be sufficient, and passes on to another point, which they, perhaps, have omitted or only alluded to. The Fourth Gospel is "the Gospel of eternity," "the spiritual Gospel," "the Gospel of the heart of Jesus"; it is the Gospel of the Incarnate Word. It has its immediate origin in the collision of Christianity with

the immemorial mysticism of the East—that unchanging conception of things unseen and divine which underlies the protean forms of natural religion. Its keynote is struck in the opening verses: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth.”

The First Gospel comes to us from the hand of Levi the publican, who, at the Master’s word, left all, that he might become an apostle. It may have circulated in two forms, an Aramaic original, and a Greek copy. Its theme is “Jesus is the Christ”; its intention is to show that Jesus of Nazareth is the burden of Old Testament prediction.

Accordingly, our Lord is presented to us as (*a*) the Son of Abraham; (*b*) the Law-giver of the New Covenant; (*c*) the Prophet foretold by Moses and foreshadowed in the prophetic order in Israel; (*d*) the theocratic King, reigning from David’s throne and wielding a sceptre of right; (*e*) the High Priest over the household of God, pouring out His soul unto death, and making intercession for transgressors; (*f*) the Lord and Mediator, sending forth His messengers even to the uttermost parts of the earth, and giving the comfort of His abiding presence to those who bear His word.

Perhaps the ruling thought of the first evangelist regarding Jesus is that He is Teacher. He is emphatically the Master whose instruction is the Truth.

Each man’s conception of the Lord is framed within his own experience, and Levi could never forget the



hour when the Prophet from Nazareth leant over the customs' booth and said, Follow Me. At once "the gainful publican" left all, rose up, and followed the Lord. It does not need the imagination of Paul Veronese's glowing canvas to suggest the breaking with the past which this act of faith implied. Whether Matthew left little or much, what he did forsake was his all.

The call and training of the Twelve are brought out with greater particularity in the First Gospel than in any of the others. The writer had followed Jesus as He went through Palestine on His ministry of reconciliation. By the Master's example and use he learned to pray. He listened to the teaching spoken to straining crowds or to stragglers along the way. He gazed on that countenance on which heaven had set its seal. He marvelled at the gracious words which fell from those patient lips, which so freely dispensed healing and pardon. With the others, he waited until nightfall brought a season of relaxation, when it was possible to pour unrestrainedly into Christ's ear wonder, interrogation, and doubt. And as the days passed, the disciples grew in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus the Lord. Until, at last, when death had broken down the middle wall of partition, and earth was charged with heavenly powers, the great commission was received by the waiting Church, "Go . . . and make disciples of all the nations . . . and lo, I am with you alway."

The Second Gospel appears to have come to us from the lips of Peter and the pen of his "interpreter," John Mark. The failures and the foolishness of Simon are

frankly related; his deeds of heroism or fidelity are lightly touched upon, or quietly passed over. The aged disciple, in fulfilment of his Lord's farewell charge, "Feed My lambs," seems to have been the first of the apostolic order to begin the work of catechetical instruction of the young converts who in the golden days of the Church's purity were "daily" added to the Lord. This work of catechising he probably continued to the end, with the aid of Mark, his "minister." Until he, too, was lifted up upon a cross to die, Simon, the son of Jonas, loved to repeat to young and eager souls the story of Jesus, which had been so sweet to him in earlier days, and was so sacred now.

Peter, an impetuous, rapid man, was impressed and subdued by our Lord's calm, resistless movement through life's thronging duties to the great accomplishment of His death. The Gospel is composed of two sections only—the ministry in Galilee and the death on Calvary. In the former of these sections Christ is seen as the Servant of the Lord and the Messenger of the Covenant (Mark i. 2, 3). His ministry moves in widening circles—first, in the synagogue; then, in the open field, to the interested groups who gathered round Him; afterwards, to the teeming multitudes. Then a time of quiet self-revelation to the Twelve brings to Peter's lips the confession of Cæsarea Philippi—"Thou art the Christ." To this keynote the Gospel is attuned; it is "the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." From that hour the disciples knew with absolute clearness of conviction that they were no

longer their own; they belonged to Christ. When they had reached this confidence, the Lord began to instruct them in the necessity and meaning of His death. And still the Isaianic prophecy of the Servant of the Lord served as a framework of this unexampled life. Years after, Simon could say to "the strangers scattered abroad," "Knowing that ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, but with precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ. . . . Who His own self bare our sins in His body upon the Tree." This is the "passion-song" of Isaiah, set to the music of the New Covenant.

The ruling thought of Mark is that Jesus is a Man who has come from God, the Servant of Jehovah, divinely commissioned; and that He having fulfilled (in His atoning death) His high commission, has now returned to God. He came, not to do His own will, but the will of Him by Whom He was sent.

The Third Gospel is received from the hands of Luke, the companion of Paul. The impression which we have of the Lord as the story passes before us, quietly and in orderly strength, is that of One who has a deep fountain of compassion and an exhaustless strength of love. He is the Messiah of Israel, but He cares also for those who are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. He stretches out hands of desire to the blind Pharisees, the fickle crowds of Jerusalem, and the dwellers in far-off lands. He willeth not that any should perish, but that all should

come unto Him, and live. Luke has the eye of a Christian doctor for the world's sickness and sore. And he has gazed upon the Healer. Dr. Sanday says expressively that some of the beautiful and tender pictures which we find in the pages of this evangelist had lain in a side-room in the great picture gallery of the life of Christ. But this artist turned aside to see what the other evangelists had passed by—pictures such as those of the lost shekel and the lost son. As Luke sits in the hired house in Rome, recalling the life of the Master, he has as the background of his portrait the heathen world, whose dumb longing had been read by him as, in company with the apostle to the nations, he had passed over land and sea "one poor soul to Christ to gain." Jesus, as Luke sees Him, is the Christ of humanity, the Healer of mankind, the Saviour of the world. Already in the narratives of the infancy there are hints of the Light which is to enlighten all nations; in the parable of the Good Samaritan and the recital of the mission of the seventy there is the promise of the advancing outreach of the divine mercy to men of every nation and tongue; and in the call of Zaccheus, the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, and the salvation of the penitent robber, we have tokens of a grace which reaches out to the uttermost. The author does not aim at being a theologian; he is an evangelist, and his message is, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."

The Fourth Gospel comes to us almost as an after-thought: it was born as if out of due time. As the

higher Alps receive the light of the sun while the lower slopes are dark with night, so the loftiest human souls receive illumination which passes beyond and above the man who lives upon lower levels. There were words spoken by Jesus which no one had understood so well as the beloved disciple; and when it was the will of God that these should be given to the Church, it was fitting that this one should be moved to record them. Many of the profound Temple sayings, and nearly all the majestic but mysterious converse of the upper room, were reserved for the pen of him who lay in the bosom of Christ.

But as the sheathed wire is needed for the electric message, so the fitting occasion must be provided for the divine communication. At the close of the first century Christianity had penetrated most of the ancient nations: it had spread to India and to Spain. It had come to death-grips with the hoary idolatries that were so soon to vanish away. And it touched and roused that untempered mysticism which is the core of the polytheistic religions. The occasion of which we speak was given by the outbreaking within the Christian Church of the weird theosophies of the mystic East. The promoters of these doctrines were willing to use the Christian terminology, to speak of Christ, His work of reconciliation, His death of sacrifice, His resurrection from the dead, and His exaltation to the right hand of God. But the Christ of their faith was not the Jesus of history: Jesus was a mere symbol or sacrament of our nature, a wave of

the Divine Being, one of countless undulations passing over the face of humanity. And the apostle wrote his Gospel to prove by an appeal to fact that the Son of God had come, that the Word had taken flesh, that He who was God and Lord of all had made His dwelling among men, had died, and having risen from the dead, had become life to His people.

It would not be correct to say that in the Fourth Gospel the emphasis rests on the Deity rather than on the humanity of the Lord. It rests with equal pressure on each. He who came from God was very man of very man, consubstantial with us as truly as He was coessential with the Father. No other evangelist so sounds the depths of our Lord's humiliation, no other rises with such adequacy to the exaltation of His glorified Manhood, as John, the son of Zebedee, the eagle of the Church.

The four Gospels give us one portrait: Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, the Word become flesh.

"These are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ . . . and that believing ye may have life in His name."

XII

*The Authority of Christ*

*“If under one aspect Christ’s earthly life was a life of humiliation, we must remember that even in this He manifested His glory to those who had eyes to see, that the cloud which veiled it came from man’s weakness and man’s unbelief, that never for one moment did He cease to be the Son of God, the Word, through whom all things were made, and in whom all things were life. . . . In Christ there are no broken or imperfect lights. In Him everything which is shown to us of right and good and lovely in the history of the whole world is gathered up once for all. Nothing limits His humanity, but the limits proper to humanity itself.”*

BISHOP WESTCOTT.



## XII

### *The Authority of Christ*

“LET rational criticism take from us what it may,” said John Stuart Mill, “it still leaves us the Christ.” This is the witness of men, even of the unbelieving. The most definite reality in history is this supreme Person who fills all time, and pours upon our fading years the light of immortality. For the present we must refrain from any consideration of our Lord’s mighty deeds of beneficence, or of His solitary and accepted work of redemption. His inspiration appears most evidently in His words. He prophesied that they would be remembered and recorded, and now they shine on the open page of Scripture. They are the light of all our seeing, and it is in their own clearness that they shine. They are quick and powerful; they are spirit and life. They are consonant in the harmony of truth. The sentences of Jesus may be gathered together in one small pamphlet,—the pages few and quickly read,—but the significance of “these sayings” of His is inexhaustible.

The question is sometimes asked, Was our Lord in His human nature omniscient? Both in asking and in answering this question one must be careful not to

dispart the Person: there is one Christ, and He is not divided. Perhaps it would not be right to say that the assumption of humanity does necessarily preclude the possession of omniscience. For the Son of the Blessed, whose home is the bosom of God, is henceforth and for ever man. His session as Son of Man (John v. 27) on the throne of judgment, where infinite wisdom distributes absolute justice, forbids us to assert necessary imperfection in the knowledge of One who has taken manhood into union with Himself.

We are on safer ground when we remind ourselves that our Lord assumed our nature in a state of humiliation. In Him, as in us, manhood was hindered in its predestined progress by the encompassing infirmities incident to the possession of a material body. The earthly course of Jesus was a life "after the flesh" (2 Cor. v. 16). Not only the analogy of His life with ours, but the Gospel narrative itself leads us to believe that Jesus of Nazareth acquired common knowledge by ordinary processes. It is twice recorded that He "advanced in wisdom" (Luke ii. 40, marg., 52). His was essentially a life of temptation surmounted by faith; and neither temptation nor faith seems to consist with omniscience. In prophetic anticipation it was said of Him, "The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of them that are taught, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear as they that are taught." And in the retrospect of His earthly life it is affirmed that "He learned obedience by the things which He suffered." He

" marvelled," was " amazed " ; on the cross He asked in His dereliction, " Why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " He died as He had lived, in faith, not in sight. On one point of revelation He intimates the limitation of His own knowledge—for the Father has reserved within His secret counsel the date of the great Apocalypse : " Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only." It is important, moreover, to observe that the nescience here affirmed is ascribed to Him, not as Son of Man, but as Son. In this fact there may lie a mystery beyond our words.

A far more vital consideration touches the question of our Lord's infallibility.

The last confirmation of the truth of Christ is His Person. Son of Man and Son of God, Spirit-begotten and Spirit-enlightened, He is the Divine and essential Word. He reveals the Father, because He is the Father's express image. He proclaims the way of salvation, for it is He who saves. He distinguishes destiny, for He is the Judge of mankind. He unfolds the glories of heaven, for heaven is His home.

The Person of Christ is the foundation laid in Zion : it is also a rock of offence to all who are disobedient. He is " set for the falling and the rising up of many in Israel ; and for a sign which is spoken against." There is at present in the minds of some a measure of impatience with the " metaphysical " language employed at Nicæa and at Chalcedon to delimit the mystery of the God-manhood. But the truth committed to the ancient formulas may be plainly read in the pages of

the New Testament. The doctrine of the personal union of Godhead and Manhood in the Word is not metaphysical, but scriptural. The explicit teaching of the New Testament regarding this unique Person is that He is (*a*) True God, (*b*) Perfect Man, (*c*) One Christ. This profound truth is expressed in the simplest of terms, but its implications are as far-reaching as any which ecclesiastical doctrine has attempted to unfold.

As soon as we begin to contemplate the inspiration of the Word made flesh, our attention is arrested by the fact that the Speaker affirms Himself to be the "I AM," attesting in this assertion that He who stands before His questioners in creature-weakness is in truth God's only-begotten Son. Whatever limitations, incident to the possession of our common nature, may have circumscribed the activities of the Incarnate Son, there is nothing in the consciousness of Jesus, as it is disclosed to us in the Gospels, which suggests the relinquishment of His proper Deity. The Word became flesh, and still the Word was God. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day, yea, and for ever.

On the other hand, our Lord was truly man, of like nature with us. He grew in wisdom. He suffered, being tempted. He learned obedience through the trials which He endured. He submitted to the imposed yoke; He bowed His will to bear an accepted burden. He called on the Father for strength; He prayed to be led by the divine truth. He craved the comfort of the eternal love. He ruled His life in accordance with the written Word. He received inspiration from the Spirit.

Whatever else the "self-emptying" of the Son of God may imply, it at least involved uttermost dependence on the Father. Uttermost dependence, but not mere creature-dependence; for He who thus lived by the Father (John vi. 57) is the Son. At this point we touch the mystery which is the unrevealed secret of the God-manhood. Here we "strike the adamant"; and our speculations come back to us, bruised, and with broken wing.

A clue, however, is put into our hands, by means of which we may at least escape from confusion of thought and fear of self-contradiction. The life of the Son, submitted in filial and mediatorial dependence to the will of the Father, was maintained by the Holy Ghost. The Scriptures seem to teach us that the Holy Spirit is the bond of the Trinity, mediating between the Father and the Son. It was fitting, therefore, that the self-same Spirit should be the love-link of union between Deity and Manhood in the Person of the Mediator. Jesus of Nazareth was born of the Spirit. At His baptism He was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. He was driven by the Spirit into the wilderness, there to be tempted by the evil one. In the power of the Spirit He preached in all the synagogues of Galilee. By the Holy Ghost He gave commandment unto the apostles whom He had chosen. By the Eternal Spirit He offered Himself unto God. Thus it was possible for the Son of God to live on earth a truly human life, being made like unto His brethren in all things.

In this relation of the Spirit to the Mediator we

may, perhaps, be able to rest our understanding when we contemplate the quiescence of the divine potencies which the Redeemer never laid down. Does it not appear from the Gospel story that the flow of the divine wisdom and power was regulated by the Holy Spirit according to the occasions of the Son of Man?

It may make our meaning clearer if we point a correspondence between the exercise of power and of knowledge on the part of the Saviour.

He came in weakness, but in that frail form there was the hiding of Jehovah's might. He was weary and footsore, yet He walked the waves. He hungered, and was faint for lack of bread, yet He multiplied the barley loaves on the Galilean hillside, that He might feed the fasting thousands of Israel. He suffered weariness and pain, yet He opened the eyes of the blind, cleansed the lepers, healed the sick, and raised the dead.

Now if we take this analogy to be our guide, we shall not presume to fix the limits of our Saviour's knowledge, even of those things which were seen and temporal. These limits were determined by no inherent necessity, but were regulated according to the varying circumstances through which the Holy One was led, and to which the supply of the Divine Spirit invariably conformed. Our Lord saw Nathanael under the fig-tree, and read the secrets of his heart. At Jacob's well He accosted a stranger, and showed so intimate an acquaintance with her history, that she exclaimed, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did." Lingered in Perea while Lazarus

languished, He announced the death of His friend, and foretold his resurrection. From the beginning He knew that Judas would betray Him. In obedience to His instructions, Simon Peter secured an unwonted draught of fishes; on another occasion He predicted that a fish caught, apparently at hazard,—“the fish that first cometh up,”—would bear a piece of money in its mouth; still later He told the too-confident disciple that Satan had desired to have him, and added the precise mark of time. And in that one respect in which He seems to confess nescience—the hour of His return—He informs us that the angels are similarly ignorant.

It is not permissible, therefore, to say that on any matter which claimed our Lord's attention He *could* not have known. The only limitation of His knowledge which Scripture authorises us to affirm was the restriction of the divine counsel.

Theories of the depotentiation of the Word, which are widely current, lead to the reduction of our Lord's authority, and place Him simply in the rank of the prophets. What we hold to be the scriptural view of His Person is that the prophetic gift which He received found in Him a response that neither seer nor saint could render; and that His authority differed, not only in degree but also in character, from that of all other ministers of the covenant, precedent or subsequent.

The “prophecies which went before” concerning Christ speak of His investiture with the Spirit in terms similar to those which express the bestowment of a

divine illumination on the messengers of the Old Covenant. The one distinguishing mark which separates the predicted Prophet from His forerunners—is that on Him was poured out the sacred plenitude, “the whole fountain and flood,” of the Spirit. But the Gospels make it quite evident that the prophetic Spirit, bestowed in measureless effusion upon Him, penetrated to the divine in His consciousness, and awoke the response of Deity. Those calm words of authority which from time to time fell from the lips of Him who is meek and lowly in heart would be the very extravagance of self-assertion, if uttered by one who spoke out from mere creature-hood. The legitimate authority of Jesus Christ reposes on Godhead.

It is apparent, therefore, that any doctrine of the Person of Christ which reduces the authority of the Master to the level of certitude on which even the most richly endowed of His followers stands, is, in the light of His own testimony, quite unthinkable. He was the Amen, the faithful and true Witness: “To this end,” He says, “have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.” Now He speaks by the Spirit, out of the fulness of divine glory; but He has no other gospel to declare than that which, in human tones, He proclaimed on earth. He holds the consciences of men without qualification, exception, or excuse, to the words which He spoke eighteen centuries ago in Palestine. The recorded sayings of Christ are final. To all eternity there can be no appeal against them. They are THE TRUTH.



XIII

*Our Lord's Relation to the Scriptures  
of the Old Testament*

“‘In the volume of the Book it is written of Me.’  
Martin Luther asks, ‘What book and what person?’  
‘There is only one Book,’ is his reply—‘Scripture ; and  
only one Person—Jesus Christ.’”

ADOLPH SAPHIR.

### XIII

## *Our Lord's Relation to the Scriptures of the Old Testament*

WE have seen that the revelation committed to Christ bears the seal of infallible truth. But there is one point which at this moment is loudly challenging attention—the nature of the authority which invests our Lord's references to the Scriptures of the Old Testament.

In considering this subject we must keep in mind two general principles.

The Lord Jesus uniformly spoke with a most convincing certainty. No doubt appears ever to have crossed His mind regarding those things which formed the substance of His teaching. He testified as from assured knowledge. Now the fact that He was perfect man may not have precluded nescience, but surely it precluded error. One cannot imagine that He who was the truth should say with no hint of dubiety or trace of hesitation things that were not.

Again, the whole compass of Scripture lay within the sphere embraced in the mission of the Redeemer. As the Messiah of Israel He came to vindicate and

interpret the volume of the Book which He held open in His hand. While His commission extended to all truth, it was addressed in the first instance to the revelation which God had of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets "by divers portions and in divers manners." By His teaching, not less than by His obedience, He came to magnify the law and make it honourable. He spoke with the assurance of perfect knowledge and unqualified authority, not only of the great principles enshrined in the Scriptures, but of the Sacred Text itself: "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." And when, the veil of flesh being rent, He went forth from among the dead, He reaffirmed His testimony to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, finding nothing to retract, nothing to explain away: "These are My words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning Me."

Our Lord's general attestation to the Old Testament is highly significant.

(a) He nourished His soul upon the written Word of God, and by it disciplined His life.

In the home in Nazareth there would undoubtedly be select portions of the Hebrew Scriptures—Deuteronomy perhaps, Isaiah, the Psalms. It is a point of some interest, but one which we cannot actually determine, whether or not there was in the cottage of

the carpenter a complete copy of the Old Testament. In an ordinary home of that degree there would not be. But this was no ordinary home. Joseph and Mary were both of the line of David: it is possible that Mary was also of priestly descent. And it is conceivable that when the fortunes of the House of David sank lower and lower, and the cherished possessions which recalled former days of splendour were parted with, one by one, the copy of the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms which had belonged to the progenitors of that favoured family would be jealously preserved, and valued above all price. Dr. Edersheim deems that it is impossible to account for our Lord's perfect knowledge of the Scriptures on any other supposition. And yet it may be that He who came into earth's lowest room bowed His heart to this, to Him surely the greatest of all privations, consenting to this impoverishment, in order that He might in all things be as the poorest of His brethren. In that case, He would be dependent on permission to study the Sacred Books in the village synagogue.

In the school system of Palestine, which, at the time of our Lord's birth, had probably extended as far as Nazareth, the young child would be enrolled in attendance at the village school, which was presided over by the officer of the local synagogue. The text-book was the Old Testament; and the first reading-book put into the hands of Jesus would be the opening section of Leviticus. One may reverently picture the fair-browed Boy, bending over the sacred ritual which prefigured His own sacrifice, seeing perhaps dimly and

afar the shadow of the cross behind the brazen altar of burnt-offering. And so, during all His years of preparation, the Saviour's study of His Father's Word progressed, and Jesus increased in wisdom and in favour with God. The confession of the Psalmist, "Thy word have I laid up in mine heart," was literally applicable to Him. It would almost appear that the entire body of Scripture, both in the Hebrew original and in the Greek translation, lay word for word in His memory; and not remembered only, but also seen in its relations,<sup>1</sup> discerned in its deepest meaning, and irradiated by the light of His Person and mission.

What is still more significant in this connection is the consideration that the Lord Jesus ruled His life by the words of Scripture. Thrice He responded to the solicitations of the evil one by an appeal to the law, thus putting Himself under the direction of the Word in even the most momentous of His spiritual experiences. Continually, in difficulty or sorrow, He stayed His heart on the great truths of revelation, and comforted Himself by the Scriptures of hope. And when His work was finished, He pillowed His dying head on the words of the Book. Dr. Waller says impressively of the subordination of the Incarnate Son to the written Word: "From that first divine and most human hunger in the wilderness, to that last divine and most human thirst upon the cross,—His first and last

<sup>1</sup> "In quoting Scripture He (our Lord) always appeals to its living and historical sense, and never quotes a saying without direct reference to the circumstances which determine its meaning."—Dean Wace, *Some Central Points of our Lord's Ministry*, p. 101.

appeal to the Scriptures in the order of the Gospel,—we find that it was His meat and drink to fulfil the written Word.”<sup>1</sup>

(b) Our Lord asserted many times, and in the strongest terms, the permanent significance of the Old Testament—

“Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. . . . It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the law to fail. . . . The scripture cannot be broken. . . . If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead” (Matt. v. 17, 18; Luke xvi. 17; John x. 35; Luke xvi. 31).

He acknowledges the authority of the constitution of Israel (Matt. xxiii. 3). Again and again He incites the Jews to a careful study of Scripture as the canon of truth, the revelation of His Person, and the guide to eternal life (Matt. xxii. 29; John v. 39, vi. 45). Point by point, He traced His blood-marked pathway by the light of Holy Scripture (Luke xxii. 37; Mark xiv. 27; Matt. xxvi. 54, 56; John xiii. 18, xv. 25, xvii. 12, xix. 28). In Him the Scriptures were “perfected,” even as He had said, “Behold, we go up to

<sup>1</sup> *The Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ*, p. 45. In his treatise on *The Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, Dr. Waller presents “a collection of passages from the four Gospels in which our Lord directly or indirectly accepts the authority of Old Testament Scripture, whether as history or law.” This collection is very well worth careful study.

Jerusalem, and all the things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of Man." The Holy Writings were the mirror of the Christ, the revelation of the Son.

It is sometimes said that our Lord handled the Old Testament Scriptures with great freedom, correcting, without hesitation, the cruder statements of law and prophecy. This is an unfortunate way of expressing an important distinction. In the divine revelation there is a dispensational sequence; therefore certain enactments of the Old Testament are limited in application, and have only a transitory authority. The rule of interpretation laid down by Augustine is much more happily phrased, "Distinguish the times, and the Scriptures will agree."

The structure of the Old Testament is a matter requiring more careful statement than we are able to give to it here. But two familiar words, *law* and *prophecy*, broadly indicate two distinct elements. The law is the direct statement of the revelation; prophecy is its exposition and enforcement.<sup>1</sup>

The law is embedded in the history. The Old Testament Scriptures are for the most part the record of the history of Israel. To this history the first ten or eleven chapters of Genesis are the prelude. The record moves in a straight line down to the call of Abram. The progress and renown of the great world-monarchies are almost ignored. Centuries of fruitful

<sup>1</sup> Here, and once or twice besides, I have quoted a few sentences from a little book written by me, entitled *Bible Study* (Stirling Book and Tract Depôt).



activity are written off in a line. The course of scientific progress and of religious decadence is merely suggested. The Spirit of inspiration refuses to linger till the cradle of the Hebrew race is reached. Then the elect people are taken into the bond of the covenant. And from this point the revelation contained in the history falls into three clearly marked strata. It is law—civil, ceremonial, moral.

For the *civil* law, perfection is nowhere claimed. Our Lord says expressly of one of its great social enactments, "Moses for your hardness of heart" gave this precept. That precept was not a purely moral decision; it was the creation of a barrier against transgression, a regulation for the preservation of good conduct, an uplifting of the low standard of domestic purity. And if it was fixed at a greatly lower level than we, Christ-enlightened and Spirit-taught heirs of the refinement of centuries, are able to contemplate with satisfaction, we must remember that statute law pitched above the moral intelligence of the people in whose name it is administered is practically valueless.<sup>1</sup>

The *ceremonial* law was the ritual expression of the

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Sanday sagaciously suggests that the civil law of the Hebrews was not a series of enactments *de novo*, but the effecting of a correspondence between the tribal use and wont of Israel and the revelation committed to Moses. "Wellhausen," he says, "is probably right in singling out as the most faithful picture of the work of Moses as lawgiver that which is given in Exodus xviii., where he is described as sitting to judge the people from morning till evening, hearing their cases and giving them answers. Here we may see the beginning of the Torah, which consisted in the first instance of decisions given in response to direct inquiry and in the name of Jehovah. The Law grew up out of the collecting and generalising of such decisions."—*Inspiration*, p. 178.

common salvation. It was the Creed of the Church in the Wilderness, wrought out in the experience of the Lord's people from that first day when the blood of sacrifice was shed under the crimson glow of the flaming sword at Eden's gate. Many of its provisions had been in use for centuries (cf. John vii. 22), and most of them had probably been observed by the first fathers of the Hebrew race. But Moses re-enacted these rites, purifying them from superstitious accretions, and so harmonising them that they became a clear mirror of the redeeming work to be accomplished centuries later on Golgotha. These rites were the divine response vouchsafed to inquiring souls, the treasure found by a vast multitude of seekers after God, the concentrated experience of ages of faith, set forth in a spectacular and sacramental form. They represented the dogmatic system of the Jewish Church; they endowed its doctrines with a visible and corporeal presence; they were the figures of the true. Each ritual act suggested a gracious promise and demanded a spiritual acceptance. Each rubric of the priesthood, each symbol of the altar, was a prophetic voice proclaiming the great evangel, "Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world!"

Thus the ceremonial law was destined to run its course in Christ. Ritual anticipations of the great redemption ceased when Jesus died. It was therefore fitting—one might almost say necessary—that He should adumbrate the vanishing away of the whole sacramental system of the Old Testament. Certain enactments were taken up into the Christian ritual—

the Passover into the Lord's Supper, and ceremonial washings into Baptism—but all besides was allowed to fade from sight (Heb. viii. 13). A series of sayings by our Lord indicates that the time of transition from the spectacular to the spiritual was at hand. But they put no dishonour on the earlier revelation :

“The hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the Father. . . . The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth : for such doth the Father seek to be His worshippers. . . . Perceive ye not, that whatsoever from without goeth into the man, it cannot defile him? . . . (This He said, making all meats clean.) . . . This cup is the new covenant in My blood” (John iv. 21, 23 ; Mark vii. 18, 19 ; Luke xxii. 20).

The *moral* law was written on the primeval granite ; it is the expression of the eternal purpose of God. It is “summarily comprehended” in the Ten Commandments. It is the experimental consequence of separation to God (the civil law), and of access to God (the ceremonial law), and so is to be traced throughout the long line of Israel's history. Law-giver, prophet, and psalmist conspire to show forth the eminence of the moral law :

“I am the Lord that brought you up out of the land of Egypt, to be your God : ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy. . . . He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Lev. xi. 45 ; Mic. vi. 8 ; cf. Ps. li. 17).

The moral law is "the righteousness of God," dimly apprehended at first perhaps, but shining ever more clearly in the experience of the children of God, until, in the manifestation of Him who is the forthshining of the Father's glory, the words of this law are seen to be pure words, as silver separated from earth in a furnace, purified seven times. The spiritual character and piercing discrimination of this law were affirmed by Christ in opposition to the outwardness of rabbinic interpretation: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second like unto it is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hangeth the whole law, and the prophets."

Prophecy, as the application and illustration of the moral law, proceeds from these central principles. The exegetical saying that "Deuteronomy is the key-note to which prophecy is set," is strictly correct, for the law-giver was himself the first of the prophets of Israel. In the speeches which he delivered when Israel was drawing near to the borders of the Holy Land he did not merely reaffirm the law: he penetrated to its inward thought and discovered its spirit. The note which Moses struck on the plains of Moab reappears in each prophetic strain.

In the succession of the prophets Jesus of Nazareth came to the waters of Jordan to be baptized into the fellowship of those whom He had come to save, that so He might fulfil all righteousness (Matt. iii. 15). In that word "righteousness" He gathered

into the unity of His own obedience the law and the prophets.

In the Sermon on the Mount, as we term it,—those sayings of His which He enunciated on the Mount of Beatitudes, recorded by Matthew as the manifesto of the kingdom which He had come to found,—our Lord summed up the moral law which Jehovah uttered from the mountain's brow, which was committed to Moses as to a mediator, and which was expanded according to the occasion of the people of Israel by the canonical prophets. "Think not," He said, "that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." His action would have been in strange contrast to these words had He then proceeded to contravene that law in even the least of its principles. A careful study of the Sermon on the Mount shows that He did not at all do this: on the contrary, He pierced through the letter to the spiritual significance of the statute, extending its application indefinitely, and adding to it the sanction of His own submission. He came from the Father, that He might magnify the law and make it honourable.

But, it may be said, there is a certain difference of tone between the Old Testament and the New. It is not that the Old Testament is less tender, but the penalty of the violated law falls with more directness. Nothing could be more pathetic than the voice of God

mourning upon the mountains for the sorrows of apostate Israel, but the judgment threatened did not therefore fail. But when Christ came the wrath of God was turned back. In the synagogue of Nazareth He closed the book upon words which He refused at that time to read—"And the day of vengeance of our God." In Jerusalem He said, "God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him" (John iii. 17). Afterwards, He expressed the implied contrast with more explicitness, "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope" (John v. 45). And again, "If any man hear My sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John xii. 47). It is as the Evangelist had said, "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

This difference became accentuated on the occasion of the refusal of the Samaritan villagers to receive the Saviour, who had set His face to go up to Jerusalem. As He went, He unveiled His Messiahship; and His rejection in such circumstances seemed to the disciples to merit judicial wrath. They recalled a somewhat different incident recorded in the history of Elijah, and asked, perhaps with heated eagerness, "Lord, wilt Thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" (Luke ix. 54). But the Lord turned, and rebuked them. Possibly He added words which are contained in a number of the early versions—"Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." The

disciples were ministers of grace, not of wrath. Their Master had come not to destroy men's lives but to save them, and they were charged to follow in His steps. The judicial functions which were committed to the hands of an Elijah were foreign to the ministry of the Son of Man.

These considerations have an important bearing on many of the incidents and allusions of the Old Testament. If they do not altogether explain, they at least throw light on such events as the judgment upon the Canaanites executed by Joshua, the destruction of the prophets of Baal in the ravine of Kishon, the slaughter of the sons of Rizpah and Michal in Gibeah of Saul, the bitter death of Agag at the hands of Samuel, and many more. The judicial character of the imprecatory psalms is also illustrated by the fact that in Old Testament times the manifestation of God was in mingled mercy and wrath. Now, in the advent of the Redeemer, the spirit of judgment is restrained: the acceptable year of the Lord has come.

(c) The sum of our Lord's teaching was drawn from the earlier fountains of inspiration; but in His application of Old Testament sayings He discovered an unimagined depth and spirituality in the earlier revelation.

It belonged to our Lord's obedience that He should speak nothing from Himself, and nothing which was not contained, at least in embryo, in the Old Testament Scriptures. And so it came to pass that His doctrine lay wholly within the compass of the truth which had

already been set forth by the sacred writers. Every utterance of Christ is planted in the soil of the Old Testament.

Archdeacon Denison has drawn up a list of passages in the Gospels in which our Lord refers with more or less directness to some Old Testament scripture. He enumerates at least four hundred; and it is certain that a still more careful scrutiny would discover many others. Luther, in his *Table-talk*, remarks, "The Old Testament is the foundation and fortress of the New Testament. If I were younger, I would seek all the words of the New Testament in Moses and the Prophets." The value for our immediate purpose of this authentication is to observe the marvellous honour which the Son of God conferred upon the writings of inspired men, when He condescended to frame the revelation of His glory within the lines which the Divine Spirit led them to trace. It is as if He lifted the significant utterances of the Old Testament to the level of His own inspirational authority. Certainly, by this action He gathered the entire body of Scripture into an organic unity.

This thought may here be carried a step further.

The earlier Scriptures were related to the teaching of Jesus as the seed is to the opened flower, as the basal structure is to the completed dwelling, as the dawning is to the day. The last of these comparisons may have been in the mind of the Apostle Paul when he recalled to Timothy the hope of the glorious return of Him who "brought life and incorruption to light through the Gospel." It was not that those truths



which relate to life and immortality had not been previously recognised; but He *illuminated* them. Before His advent they were dimly descried in the pale shimmer of the morning: at His coming they were transfigured in the splendour of noon.

Perhaps there is nothing which proves the inspiration of the Old Testament Scriptures more powerfully than this consideration. Out of the acorn which conceals the promise of the future, the branching oak unfolds itself in beauty and strength. Similarly, the full-orbed teaching of the Master evolved itself, under the guidance of supreme wisdom, from those ancient records in which it lay implicit. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son."

It is impossible to conceive the attribution of a loftier dignity to the Old Testament than that its pages should become the channel of the perfect revelation of the Word.

XIV

*Our Lord's Witness to the  
Old Testament*

*“If it be obvious that certain theories about the Old Testament must ultimately conflict with our Lord’s unerring authority, a Christian will pause before he commits himself to these theories.”*

CANON LIDDON.

## XIV

### *Our Lord's Witness to the Old Testament*

BIBLICAL CRITICISM occupies itself with the letter of Scripture, and it may be argued that to adduce any incidental word of Christ's as evidence bearing on the mere externals of revelation is to make an unlawful use of His authority.

It is indeed a grave matter to oppose the teaching of Christ to historical research. In general, critical error ought to be met by critical truth. The authority of the Master is incontrovertible, but there will always be a difference of opinion with respect to the content and application of His sayings. As an interpreter of Scripture no one of us is infallible: we may be firmly settled in our own mind, but we ought not hastily to judge those who come to an opposite decision. It is quite possible that our Lord has not foreclosed all those questions which seem to us to be finally determined by His words.

But when the teaching of Christ and the "results" of criticism do unmistakably come into conflict, we must remember that criticism proceeds upon no surer

ground than a balance of probabilities, whereas the teaching of Christ possesses a divine authority. We must, in no case, affirm the impoverishment of the Divine Word in such a manner as to suggest that He became subject to the errors and prejudices of His time. It is our duty, on the contrary, to prosecute criticism more reverently, more diligently, more understandingly. God has many voices; they mingle and are harmonious. Research will surely attune itself to revelation, reason to faith, nature to spirit.

Relief from the tension of faith, or suspense of judgment, which such considerations are apt to create, is sometimes sought in the averment that it was our Lord's wont to speak in conformity with the opinions of His contemporaries. It may be acknowledged without hesitation that He conveyed instruction in the current phraseology of His time. And if (for example) He had referred the Psalter as a whole to David, we could conceive of His doing so as simply and undogmatically as an astronomer speaks of sunrise or sunset. But it is not certain that any such expressions occur in the teaching of Christ.

The difficulty becomes acute when our Lord affirms, as it were deliberately and with apparent emphasis, a judgment upon Scripture which modern biblical criticism considers it its duty to oppose. In dealing with this question we may confine ourselves to three particulars. They are, however, particulars of large importance.

1. Our Lord accepted the truth of the history of the Chosen People as it is recorded in Scripture.

Also, He laid emphasis not infrequently on the fact that events happened in the precise way in which they are narrated in the historical books of the Old Testament. He speaks of the marriage law as observed in Eden (Mark x. 6). He refers to Abel as a witness to truth, describes his death as martyrdom, and declares that his blood will be required (Matt. xxiii. 35). He founds a reason for watchfulness and earnest care upon the story of the Flood (Matt. xxiv. 37), the destruction of Sodom (Matt. x. 15), and the sentence executed upon Lot's wife (Luke xvii. 32). He speaks of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as historic personages who have entered the home of God (Matt. viii. 11). He endorses the truth of the record with reference to the miracles performed by Elijah and Elisha (Luke iv. 25-27). And He finds in Jonah's remarkable history a sign of His own decease and sepulture, and anticipates the witness which the Ninevites will bear in the day of judgment against the men of His own generation (Matt. xii. 40; Luke xi. 32).

The full consideration of this point would carry us far beyond our scope. Without pronouncing on mere exegetical details, we may frankly believe that our Master accepted the Scriptures of the Old Testament at their face value. He held them to be precisely that which they said they were.

Now, it would be difficult (might we not say, impossible?) on any other understanding of the Old Testament records, than that they contain authentic history, to treat them as an integral part of the divine revelation.

For, in the first place, the record which enshrines the revelation must be an honest piece of work. We expect the human authors of a Bible to take at least reasonable pains to ensure accuracy; and an entire subordination of personal predilections in the presence of the great truths which they announce, is certainly required of them. That consideration alone will secure for us a general trustworthiness of statement. But there is another which will carry us still further.

The revelation of God inheres in the history. The covenant is made with Abraham; the promise is to his "seed"; Israel is a channel of grace to the nations; in the tribe of Judah and in the line of David, Messiah shall appear. The major promises are expressed in terms of current history: the kingdom, the priesthood, the nation foreshow the Coming One. If the spiritual disclosures of psalmist and prophet are as the blossom of revelation, the historical circumstances are as the sheath which preserves the opening flower. In an historical revelation the events recorded and the truths expressed interpenetrate, and cohere in an unbreakable integrity.

2. A number of references, some of them strikingly significant, are made to Moses the Law-giver. The general constitution of Israel was received from his hand (John vii. 19); the Ten Commandments were transmitted by him (Mark vii. 10), also the rite of circumcision (John vii. 22), the laws of purification (Mark i. 44), and the enactment relating to divorce (Matt. xix. 8). It was he who led the children of Israel through the wilderness, who lifted up the brazen

serpent (John iii. 14), through whom the promise of the manna was given (John vi. 32). The authority of Moses was from God, and is still to be observed: the scribes are to be obeyed because they sit in Moses' seat (Matt. xxii. 2, 3). And the great law-giver wrote a book in which he foretold the coming of the Christ (John v. 46). These and other instances seem to imply that the Scripture account of the giving of the law is true to fact, and that the very writings of Moses were in the hands of the scribes and Pharisees who oppugned the teaching of the Lord. Perhaps a still more impressive testimony was given by the Lord after His resurrection (Luke xxiv. 44). Then, assuredly, He had outpassed the limitations which encompass our common life in the flesh.

These facts are plain; but it is important that we should draw just conclusions from them. If criticism should ever find itself in a position to prove that "the books of Moses" have passed through various recensions, and have been brought level to the understanding of later ages by the addition of explanatory or confirmatory notes, I do not know that anything that our Lord has said forbids us to accept these decisions. What is certain is, that He avouches the good faith of these books, teaching us plainly that when they assert that divine communications were made to Moses these assertions are true in fact.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The man who scrawls in the margin some note, explanatory, historical, or archæological, some illustrative quotation,—perhaps a snatch of song,—some story of a patriarch which he believes to be true, is morally guiltless; but he who knowingly writes that God has said that which He has not said, that He has made an agreement on certain terms, when in fact He has not



After a great deal of extravagant writing about the origin of the Mosaic Law has been given to the world, the trend of criticism appears to be setting towards the "traditional" belief that the law-giver of Israel was no other than Moses the man of God.

Many factors have contributed to this alteration of opinion. First of all, the conviction of the impossibility of introducing into the life of a people so literary, so vigilant, so mobile, yet so conservative withal, as the Jews, "a conception of Israel's development totally different from that which, as any one may see, is set forth in the Old Testament" (Kuenen), has become almost irresistible. History leaves ineffaceable marks along the way by which it has come. The shock of the Exile would only fix more deeply in the heart of this proud but unhappy people the memory of their glorious past. No critical scheme has yet been proposed which can erase from the first documents the story of the redemption from the Egyptian bondage, the exodus, the wilderness journeyings, the conquest of Canaan, the heroic episodes of the days of the judges, the religious revivals under Samuel, David, Elijah. And to strike out the life-work of the great law-giver

made an agreement on those terms, commits an offence which, having regard to the circumstances, is probably the most heinous of which a human being can be guilty. . . . Nor can it be contended that a different conception of the nature of the offence would have found favour in ancient Israel. 'Ye shall not add'—it is from Deuteronomy itself that I am quoting—'Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it' (iv. 2). . . . As to the suggestion that God inspired the forgeries—a suggestion which should be attributed to mental confusion, and not to an intent to blaspheme—the answer of the Pentateuch is clear, convincing, annihilating: 'God is not a man that He should lie' (Num. xxiii. 19).—Wiener, *Studies in Biblical Law*, pp. 48, 49.

would be to extract the centre-bolt from the bridge of history, and lay it, a wreck, across the stream of time.

Religion is even mightier than the pride of race; and never has religious conservatism been so strong as among the Jews. It is quite unthinkable that a people who, during the whole course of their history, have clung with a passionate enthusiasm to their religious institutions, should permit a revolution in things pertaining to faith to take place so quietly as to leave not one mark on the page of history. It is not in the nature of the Jew to shatter and then recast his ideals with such calmness that the fact of his having done so can be inferred only by the most patient and persevering scrutiny many centuries after the event. For psychological reasons, if there were no other, it is impossible to believe that "the levitical legislation of the Pentateuch is entirely the product of a very late age, a mere figment of the post-captivity priesthood" (Colenso).

There are other reasons—many of them—which are only less impressive than the above; but into the consideration of these we are not able now to enter.

3. Our Lord usually referred to Scripture on the side of its divine origination: only four of the sacred writers are cited by name—Moses, David, Isaiah, Daniel. But the reference to David is remarkably definite. It occurs in connection with an affirmation which the hundred and tenth Psalm contains of the Lordship of the Incarnate Redeemer.

As the Lord Jesus, on one occasion, was teaching

in the temple, He tried to raise the thoughts of the scribes who contended with Him to the scriptural truth regarding the august Person and divine mission of the Messiah. The scribes acknowledged that the Christ was to be a son of David; but David had saluted Him as Lord—

“How then doth David in the Spirit call Him Lord?” (Matt. xxii. 43).

“David himself said in the Holy Spirit” (Mark xii. 35).

“David himself saith in the book of Psalms” (Luke xx. 42).

The argument of our Lord seems to depend on the acceptance of the hundred and tenth Psalm as written by the Psalmist King. Christ's ascription of the authorship to the son of Jesse was not a mere passing reference, but a calculated statement. In view of all the circumstances, we cannot assert that the Saviour wished to entangle His hearers in their own ignorance. It was not His habit to employ the devices of a rhetorician, nor did He ever try to win a barren victory. Was He Himself ignorant? And if so, can one who argues from misapprehension in a matter of fact to a spiritual conclusion be indeed an infallible teacher? But, says a recent writer on *The Authority of Christ*, the assumption of the Davidic authorship of the hundred and tenth Psalm is now practically surrendered.<sup>1</sup> If we should ask, On what grounds? we receive no answer. Nor is it easy to feel the force of any argument urged against our Lord's decision.

<sup>1</sup> Forrest, *The Authority of Christ*, p. 68.

In this matter, language gives us little or no guidance. It is true that one commentator distinguishes two inflections as "late formations," adding, "The latter is a gloss, and the former an error." But scholars so far removed from each other as Ernest Renan and Professor Kirkpatrick agree in assuring us that linguistic considerations furnish at best a precarious criterion of date. Different critics assign this Psalm to various periods—from the pre-Deuteronomic age to the second century B.C.; and grammarians of the highest repute find no reason to deny its Davidic authorship.

The only argument to the contrary which has even apparent weight is the alleged uniqueness in the Psalter of a direct reference to the Messiah—in the words, "Jehovah said unto my lord."

"My lord" is either the reigning king, in which case the Psalm was in all probability written by a subject, or the term indicates the Messiah. The latter interpretation is that which was affirmed by Christ and accepted by the Pharisees. The only argument which can be urged against this interpretation is (as we have already mentioned) that there is no parallel for a prophetic recognition of the Messianic King which is not mediated through the person of an earthly monarch. If it were necessary one might, in view of Psalm ii. and Isaiah lii. 13—liii. 12, raise the question of the uniqueness of an immediate reference to the Messiah. But we do not insist upon this point, for the form of prediction is certainly unusual. And this singular feature in Psalm cx. is precisely the point on which

our Lord designed to fix the attention of His antagonists. This interpretative fact is not always remembered. Dr. Driver, for example, says with less than his accustomed carefulness: "This Psalm, though it may be ancient, can hardly have been composed by David. If read without *præjudicium*, it produces the irresistible impression of having been written, not by a king with reference to an invisible spiritual Being, standing above him as his superior, but by a prophet *with reference to the theocratic king.*"<sup>1</sup>

Now, reverence will not allow us to deny that our Lord came to the consideration of all questions with a quite unbiassed mind. He was, to say no more, a perfect man. We cannot think of *Him* as blinded by a pre-judgment. And what is so strikingly evident to Dr. Driver and to those who share his opinions must have been no less apparent to our Lord and to the doctors of the law who encircled Him. They had the feeling of the Old Testament as deeply and as keenly as any modern scholar can have. One should not too readily conclude that a perfectly obvious consideration has been overlooked by men of trained and competent minds. On the contrary, as we have seen, the point to which our Lord held the attention of His hearers was precisely that which stumbles Dr. Driver. Our Lord reminds His hearers of the remarkable fact that David,

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Driver does not quite correctly state the alternative to the view which he propounds. He speaks as if those who defend the obvious inference of our Lord's words assert that the Psalm refers to "an invisible spiritual Being." Rather, it is to the Promised One who shall fulfil in His own person all that the Davidic monarchy gathered round itself in symbol and prediction.

occupant for the time being of the Messianic throne, rises from his place of power, and, divesting himself of the robes of authority, lays his crown at the feet of the true "theocratic King," addressing Him as a subject may address his Sovereign—"Jehovah said unto my lord."

I have said that David was occupant for the time being of the Messianic throne. This is a point of some importance in the interpretation of the Psalm. In Psalm xlv. 6, the seat of the Davidic dynasty is denominated "the throne of God"; in 1 Chron. xxix. 23 it is entitled "the throne of Jehovah." And if Psalm cx. be not mediated through a historic ruler, it undoubtedly is mediated through an earthly rule. A full possibility of the interpretation which our Lord has authorised of this Psalm is embedded in "the last words of David"—

"The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me: One that ruleth over men righteously, that ruleth in the fear of God, He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds. . . . Verily my house is not so with God; yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for it is all my salvation, and all my desire, although He maketh it not to grow" (2 Sam. xxiii. 3-5).

And in earlier words there is an anticipation of it—

"Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me thus far? And this was yet a small thing in Thine eyes, O Lord God; but Thou

hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come; and this, too, after the manner of men, O Lord God" (2 Sam. vii. 18, 19).

I think it would not be difficult to show that the mediation of the Messianic hope through an institution belongs as naturally to Old Testament prophecy as its mediation through an individual. And in this case there seems to be a particular reason for the selection of an institution rather than of an individual.

Mosaism, as Paul has taught us, was an ellipse in the history of redemption (Gal. iii. 17). The patriarchs were before Moses. The kingdom of God was world-wide in determination from the beginning. Before the Aaronic priesthood was established, the priesthood of nature held sway. In the reign of David the citadel of the old priest-kings of Salem fell into the hands of the Israelites. By that capture the enthronement of Jehovah's deputy on the holy hill of Zion was secured, and the way prepared for the erection of a temple to the Lord. Adoni-zedek, King of Jerusalem, had been slain by Joshua; but his precursor Melchi-zedek, who appears to have been over-lord of Palestine, was "priest of the most high God." He brought to Abraham bread and wine, as if conveying to him, with these samples of the produce of the land, the title-deeds to the inheritance which Jehovah had already assigned to him and to his heirs for ever.

Melchi-zedek was king and priest; and apparently king in virtue of his priesthood. Primarily Lord of Righteousness, He became in consequence Ruler of Salem (see Heb. vii. 2). What more natural than

that in the days of the establishment of the Israelitish monarchy and the bringing of the ark of the covenant to Zion, the heirs of the promise should be reminded that the kingdom of Jehovah had endured from the beginning of time, and that the priesthood of cleansing was unchangeable? What more natural than that those events which knit the faith and destiny of Israel to the life of the great world beyond, should be celebrated by an outburst of prophetic song? And if the Spirit of God selected the human author of these great achievements to compose such a psalm, what could be less matter of wonder than that he, foreseeing the personal advent of the true Agent of the history of redemption, should be swift to lay his earthly crown at the feet of Him whose right it was to reign? <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The figure of Melchizedek, King of Salem, loomed large upon the imagination of later ages out of the mists that enveloped the history of Canaanitish Jerusalem. But the romance is now making way for sober history. The letters on clay tablets in the Babylonian language and writing, found at Tel el-Amarna in Upper Egypt, have come to our help. Several of them were sent to the Pharaoh from Ebed-Tob, King of Jerusalem, and they show that Jerusalem was already the dominant state of Southern Palestine. Its strong position made it a fortress of importance, and it was the capital of a territory which stretched away towards the desert of the South. Its name was already Jerusalem or Uru-Salim, 'the city of Salim'—the god of peace—and the hieroglyphic texts of Egypt accordingly speak of it simply as Shalama or Salem, omitting the needless 'Uru'—'city.'"—Sayce, *The Early History of the Hebrews*, p. 28.



XV

*The Answer of the Soul to Christ*

*“ And being thus admonished to return to myself, I entered even into my inward self, Thou being my Guide : and I was able to do it, for Thou wert become my Helper. . . . And Thou didst beat back the weakness of my sight, streaming forth Thy beams of light upon me most strongly, and I trembled with love and awe : and I perceived myself to be far off from Thee, in the region of unlikeness. . . . And I heard, as the heart heareth, nor had I room to doubt, and I should sooner doubt that I live, than that the truth is not.”*

ST. AUGUSTINE.

## XV

### *The Answer of the Soul to Christ*

THE ultimate authority in religion is the word of God in the spirit of man. In conformity with the fact that man in his creation received the impress of the divine character, the Eternal God continues to reproduce His own image in the created spirit—the truth in our nature answering to the truth in God, as the clay turns to the seal. This correspondence, broken by sin, has not been wholly destroyed; and when it is renewed in grace we recognise the testimony of the Divine Spirit, certifying to our spirits the truth as it is in Jesus. God is our true being, and in the interrelation of spirit with Spirit truth attains to its most convincing certainty. “The witness of the Spirit,” says Calvin, “is such a persuasion as requires no reasons—the mind reposes on it with more firmness and constancy than any reasons can afford—yet it is such a knowledge as is supported by the highest reason.”

The lamp of the divine illumination shines most clearly in the regenerate, but God has not left Himself without witness in the darkest mind. “There is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding.”

The "superior principle of reflection or conscience," which was designed to secure self-mastery to the soul, is native and inward, but it brings into the life an authority which is unquestioned, which can only come from above.<sup>1</sup>

Sin has entered our nature, and has produced a certain disproportion among our powers. The harmony of our faculties is disturbed; the supremacy of reason is imperilled, the passions lift themselves up in undisciplined strength, the will is overborne by the lower appetencies, the conscience is darkened. But man, knowing that he has fallen, and is as a king dethroned, knowing that he is unable of himself to regain his proper being and to maintain his self-control, is yet conscious of the height from which he has descended, and is possessed by an unquenchable longing to recover the inheritance of which he has been despoiled. He is not in utter darkness, nor yet in perfect day; he gropes uneasily in the shifting half-lights of the dawn. He stretches lame hands of faith into the void, feeling after God, if haply he may find Him.

Greek philosophers frequently allude to the response which the soul in its inmost being makes to a divine

<sup>1</sup> "There is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart as well as his external actions; which passes judgment upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust; which, without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him, the doer of them, accordingly; and which, if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always of course goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and confirm its own."—Butler, *Sermons on Human Nature*, ii.

announcement. The spirit of man "salutes" (cf. Heb. xi. 13) the revelation of Jesus Christ. The instincts of our moral nature reach out towards those things which are announced to us in the word of the Gospel. The sense of guilt suggests judgment, redemption, pardon. The sense of powerlessness enables us to apprehend the reality of the victory of Christ, the gift of the Spirit, and holiness through faith. The sense of incompleteness foreshadows the resurrection of the body, the perfection of the soul, and the blessedness of eternal fellowship with God. The testimony of James Hinton accords with common experience: "It was not," he says, "the prophecies that made me believe the Bible, nor the miracles, nor the impossibility of accounting for all sorts of things unless it were true; but it was simply that I felt myself unholy, and I did not think there was a power anywhere that could sanctify me, unless it were in that book."

If it were possible to observe with exactness the instinctive judgments of our nature, we should be able to construct upon them the entire Christian Creed. And confused though these essential utterances are, we at once recognise their correspondence with the great truths of the gospel, when these are made known to us in the revelation of Christ.

The relation of the "religious" to the "Christian" consciousness is, accordingly, the relation of hope to fulfilment. The instincts of humanity attain to perfect acquiescence in the believing contemplation of the Redeemer. All our experience tends to confirm that significant word, "The soul of man is natively

Christian." But it is Christian by desire and impulse rather than by apprehension and attainment. Our spiritual faculties reach out as by a spontaneous impulse towards the manifestation of the Incarnate Word.

In this sense, then, the Christian revelation is not something superimposed upon the religion of nature; it is the religion of nature restored, perfected, interpreted by the Son of God.

And yet, as a plain matter of historic fact, Christianity is separated from the ethnic religions by a gulf that cannot be passed. Among the faiths of the world it stands alone. There is only one name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, and that name belongs to history. We joyfully confess that the Saviour who has entered the realm of sense and time transcends experience. His Person is divine. His words, His acts are those of Deity. He inhabiteth eternity. But He has been revealed in time. The Jews were His contemporaries, the prophets His forerunners, the apostles His witnesses. At every point the course of Scripture history relates itself to Him. The Old Testament and the New are bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The late Bishop Westcott defined Christian doctrine at any given time as "the present intellectual appreciation of certain events."<sup>1</sup> The actual events which signify the content of Christianity may include the faith and patience of the saints, the persistence and progress of the Church, the establishment of the

<sup>1</sup> Compare Illingworth. "Dogma is abbreviated history, compendiously expressed."—*Reason and Revelation*, p. 209.

kingdom of heaven.<sup>1</sup> But these all hold their reality from the earthly self-manifestation of the Eternal Word. From each separate fact of Christian experience we are led back through ages of testimony to the historic Christ. And Christian doctrine at any given time is "the present intellectual appreciation" of the events which relate to Jesus Christ, and are recorded in the Scriptures.

Christian certainty, therefore, comes to us from without. For, as we have seen, the Christian revelation is charged with truths of which the constitution of our nature cannot assure us; such truths as these—the mercy of God to a fallen race, the preciousness of the blood of ransom, union with the Redeemer in His death and resurrection, and a blessed immortality in the vision and enjoyment of God. In regard to these truths, nature affords at most an unverifiable hope. If it does not allow us to deny, it will not permit us to affirm. It cannot yield us Christian certainty. That is brought to us from without: the glory of God is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

In his *Soliloquia* Augustine asks himself, "What do you wish to know?" The answer is, "God and the soul." "Nothing more than this?" "This, and this only." The teaching of Christ concerns itself immediately with these two themes. To this fact our Lord alluded in His interview with Nicodemus: "If I told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" The "earthly things" were those which had reference to the needs of

<sup>1</sup> These are set forth prophetically in the New Testament Scriptures.

the soul; the "heavenly things" were the revelation of God. In either sphere the words of Christ bear the stamp of perfect verity: "Every one that is of the truth," He says, "heareth My voice."

Our Lord's primary appeal to us is in the region of "earthly things." His first challenge is addressed to the truth within, a dimmed but not wholly obscured reflection of His own spotless truth. "Why, even of yourselves," He asks, "judge ye not what is right?" He pours the light of God into the secret depths of our consciousness: if we continue in sin we have no excuse to offer, and His accusing question falls on our hearts without protest: "If I say truth, why do ye not believe Me?" His sayings in relation to life carry such power of assurance that they anticipate the judgment of the last day. They were spoken to peasants, fishermen, Pharisees: they bore on the simple relations of life which had persisted in that Eastern land from primitive times. But they have found universal application, and never shall become old: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." On the needs of the soul, on conversion, and on conduct, the last word has been spoken, and the speaker is the God-man.

This, let me repeat, is the manner of our Lord's initial appeal to men. But from the consideration of "earthly things" He rises invariably into the region of pure spiritual truth.

Auguste Sabatier says, strikingly, but with something less than perfect accuracy: "Never once, in any connection, not more in the narrative of St. John than



in the synoptic tradition, have I found Jesus in the order of the idea, or of theoretic instruction: He is always in the practical order of life and moral activity." It is true that our Lord invariably meets the inquirer in "the practical order of life," but He rises inevitably to the recognition of His own person, and to the contemplation of God.

One or two illustrations of this characteristic of His teaching may be instanced out of a multitude.

In His conversation with Nicodemus, the Saviour began by affirming the necessity of regeneration; then He unfolded the manner of the Spirit's working: by this means He led on to the consideration of the atoning sacrifice; and finally ascended to the eternal love into which there came, "before the foundation of the world," the acceptance of the Cross. "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son."

In His farewell appeal to the men of Capernaum, our Lord recalls His gracious ministry of faith and prayer and goodness, which had lifted that favoured city even to heaven. Then, as He feels it sinking through His upraised hands to the pit of hell, He falls back on the electing love of God; thence He passes onward to the acknowledgment of the Father and the revelation given in the Son: "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." Afterwards descending to the sad and toil-worn multitudes who crowded around Him, He invited them, in words which

"wander through eternity," to come to Him and be at rest.

As our Lord was walking in Solomon's porch at the feast of the Dedication, the Jews came round Him, and said, "How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly." Jesus answered the impatient question by assuming the sweet and tender character of the Good Shepherd, assigned to Him in the Old Testament. He spoke of His care for the sheep, His faithfulness and strength, the eternal life without fear of forfeiture which He conferred; and did not stay until He had carried their confidence in Himself up to the very being of God: "I and the Father are one."

One might illustrate this point from nearly every page of the Gospel history. Our Lord appeals, in the first instance, to the native instincts of the soul and to the experience of life; thereafter He raises the mind of the inquirer into that spiritual region to which those instincts point, and in which that experience shall find its perfect accomplishment.

God is love: and man, who was created in the divine image and likeness, discovers in that supreme affection the root of his true being. But love is marred by sin, and the thirst for God is quenched in the lust and pride of self-pleasing. Into this chaos of ill-desire there comes the brooding movement of the Divine Spirit, which leads to the vision of God. But as the soul turns again to Him who is the Fountain of truth and of blessedness, a sense of sin and a fear of wrath invade the recesses of the spirit, and mountains of

provocation rise\* between the offender and the dishonoured majesty of the Thrice Holy. The penitent complaint of the Psalmist gives expression to the dumb grief of the contrite heart—

Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned,  
 And done that which is evil in Thy sight ;  
 That Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest,  
 And be clear when Thou judgest.  
 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity ;  
 And in sin did my mother conceive me.  
 Behold, Thou desirest truth in the inward parts.

The evangelical assurance which follows—

And in the hidden part Thou shalt make me to know wisdom

is not the speech of nature, but of grace. Nevertheless, when nature hears that voice it turns eagerly towards it.<sup>1</sup>

Of all the institutions of religion, that which is at once the most ancient and the most widely observed is sacrifice. In the least instructed mind there is a dim apprehension of a mercy in God which prevails over sin, whose conquest is marked by suffering even unto death, whose solemn but tender efficacy is reconciliation, atonement, communion.

In the Cross of Christ the divine attributes, as they are displayed in relation to man, are brought to con-

<sup>1</sup> "I lately heard a missionary sister, who for years had laboured in China, relate the following :—She was once describing the loving character of the Christian's God to a company of her Chinese sisters. As she went on in her holy enthusiasm picturing God's real character as full of mercy to the sinful and the suffering, one of the Chinese women turned to her neighbour and said, 'Haven't I often told you that there *ought to be* a God like that?'"—H. C. Mabie, *The Meaning and Message of the Cross*, p. 215.

summate harmony ; in the Cross the needs of the soul in regard to sin, redemption, holiness are met. The Cross is the quick centre of the Christian revelation.

Now, if the Cross were a mere idea—a sacrament of the love of God—it might still be possible to gather round it a scheme of doctrine. But it would not be possible to proceed upon it (and Christianity is a life), to find in it an unfailling source of spiritual energy—the power of God unto salvation. That can be assured to us only in the reality of the sacrifice of Christ. It is the actual death on Golgotha which is life to perishing souls.

It is from that Cross, therefore,—the temporal death, the historical atonement,—that the saints of every sect and age and clime trace the rise of their spiritual experience. And in all the things of the spirit the supremacy of the Cross is confessed. Graceless groans beneath his burden till he comes to “a place somewhat ascending,” where a broken grave stretches and a cross stands. The redeemed soul finds the motive for consecration in the remembrance of the Man of Sorrows : This He bare for me ; what have I done for Him ? The wanderer turns his steps towards that Elim where clear fountains spring, where shadowing palms temper the burning heat of noon. And in the hour of the last dread conflict the departing saint whispers :—

Rock of Ages cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee ;  
Let the water and the blood,  
From Thy riven side which flowed,  
Be of sin the double cure :  
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

In the whole history of the Christian Church nothing is, or could be, more significant than the fact that the dying Lord gathered His "little children" round the Memorial Feast, saying, "This is My body which is given for you : this do in remembrance of Me. . . . This cup is the new covenant in My blood, even that which is poured out for you." As the Communion table is spread in the very centre of the Church's worship, so the Cross is enshrined in the very heart of the Church's creed. The Cross, therefore, as the supreme fact of time responding to the instincts and needs of the soul, is the pivot of Christian certainty. And Christian authority is given in the witness of the Divine Spirit to the Person of the Redeemer, and to the great truths of salvation which realise themselves in His atoning work.

XVI

*The Universality of the Bible*

*“The Holy Scriptures are to believing souls what the meadow is to the ox, what the home is to the man, what the nest is to the bird, the stream to the fish, and the cleft of the rock to the sea-fowl.”*

MARTIN LUTHER.

## XVI

### *The Universality of the Bible*

THE Bible is sometimes spoken of as a fruit of the Eastern mind. The distinction between East and West is subtle and far-reaching; those who are most intimately aware of it are the most reluctant to express it in terms. Matthew Arnold has concentrated attention on one characteristic: the West is energetic, the East is contemplative.<sup>1</sup> Others assert that the East is patient, whereas the West is eager and

<sup>1</sup> In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,  
The Roman noble lay;  
He drove abroad, in furious guise,  
Along the Appian Way.

He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,  
And crowned his hair with flowers—  
No easier nor no quicker passed  
The impracticable hours.

The brooding East with awe beheld  
Her impious younger world.  
The Roman tempest swelled and swelled,  
And on her head was hurled.

The East bowed low before the blast  
In patient, deep disdain;  
She let the legions thunder past,  
And plunged in thought again.

*Obermann Once More.*



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ambitious; that the East is evasive, whereas the West is direct; that the East is despondent and retrospective, whereas the West looks sunward and is fain to hope. Such characterisations are at best incomplete, but it is important to observe that the Bible knows nothing of them. The Scriptures belong to the East, they belong also to the West. The Jewish race is the bond of union between the two hemispheres. Jesus, the universal Man, is the rod of the stem of Jesse; and the Bible, the universal Book, is the fruit of the national life of Israel. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments give utterance to the voice of humanity.

It may be said that the Jewish race is intolerant even to arrogance. And certainly, at times, the charity of God seems to force itself against the national and racial pride of Israel. But the tenderness of divine love becomes the more precious when, like a root out of a dry ground, or like a rose blossoming amid the desert heath, it evidences its heavenly origin. What a world of regret breathes in the words of Jehovah, the long-suffering, as He recalls the splendid civilisation of the kingdom of the Pharaohs which He brought low for Israel's sake, "I gave Egypt as thy ransom." What an unexpected revelation of wistful and pleading love lifting itself up against the pride of the Assyrian, and "labouring" to win to repentance and belief an imperial race, is contained in the remonstrance of God with Jonah: "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, *for the which thou hast not laboured*, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and

should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city ; wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand ; and also much cattle ? ”

How vividly the Bible impresses us with its familiar and tender speech ! Heine speaks thus of the Book to which he attributed his “ conversion ” : “ An old, homely book, modest as nature, and as natural ; a book that has a workaday and unassuming look, like the sun that warms us, like the bread that nourishes us, a book that seems to us as familiar and as full of kindly blessing as the old grandmother who reads daily in it with dear trembling lips, and with spectacles on her nose. And the book is called, quite shortly, *the Book, the Bible.* ”

A great scholar, criticising the difficult language of a theological work, sagely remarks, “ There is no doubt that the language which ‘ wives and wabsters ’ speak is capable of expressing everything which any reasonable man can desire to say to his fellows. ” And Ruskin, for all his affluent diction, makes Neith say to Santa Barbara : “ Men must be spoken simply to, my dear, if you would guide them kindly and long. ” Among books, there is no one which has plainness of speech like the Bible ; in the Bible there is no simplicity like that of the recorded sayings of Jesus ; among the words of the Master those are the most daringly unadorned which flow out of deep emotion. What marvellous simplicity, what depth, what persuasiveness belong to words like these : “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children

together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not." Perhaps there never was a word spoken on earth which has penetrated more deeply into the hearts of men than this absolutely simple ejaculation. Even a poor echo which Shakespeare puts into the lips of Volumnia, the Roman matron, is thought by critics to be very beautiful.

If simplicity be the very truth, it follows that simplicity is beautiful. Robert Burns was never able to read the closing verses of the seventh chapter of Revelation without tears. The language of these verses is exceedingly delicate in its homeliness of phrase. The underlying imagery is pastoral; until in the last clause a mother's hand wipes from the tear-soiled face all stain of tears. But where in all literature will you find anything more exquisite? It is related of Hume, the philosopher, that he on one occasion declared that the finest passage in English speech was Prospero's farewell to his art—

The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,  
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,  
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,  
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,  
Leave not a wrack behind.

The friend whom he addressed agreed that the passage quoted was majestically beautiful; "but," said he, "let me read you this." He took the Bible in his hand, and read: "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another

book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works." David Hume listened with reverent attention. "That," he said, "is finer." It is finer, because it is simpler, and because its simplicity is founded on pure truth and deep feeling. In a word, its beauty belongs to its humanity.

Things which to an unreflective mind may seem to be quite trivial are part of the Word of God. We read not only without surprise, but with a sense of divine fitness, of God's numbering the hairs of our head, of the fifth sparrow given gratuitously to the purchaser of four, of Paul's old cloak left at Troas and missed in the wintry damps of Nero's prison, of the exact enumeration of the fishes of the miraculous draught taken in the grey morning when Christ stood on the shore, and of a thousand other homely and human incidents recorded in the Scriptures. Nothing which affects the life of men lies beyond the concern of God. The Bible has an amazing amplitude of reach—the compass of our greatest humanists is narrow in comparison—and always the events depicted are set in the light of truth.

How tenderly and sympathetically the Bible tells the ever-fresh story of earthly love! Ruth, Rebekah, the Shulamite, Ezekiel—these and other names leap to our lips at once, as we retrace in thought the histories of Holy Writ. Think for a moment of Jacob. As he fares forth from his childhood's home, a multitude of the heavenly host encamp around him. Only

a few days later he encounters Rachel. For the love he bears her, seven years of toil pass as one day. All his life after is irradiated with the brightness of her presence, or darkened by the sorrow of her death. "As for me," he said, as he summed up his career in a word, "As for me . . . Rachel died by me in the land of Canaan in the way, when yet there was but a little way to come unto Ephrath; and I buried her there."

Unless one has been at pains to notice them, the numerous references in Scripture to domestic life will cause the careful reader some surprise. The constantly recurring household duties—sweeping the house, lighting the Sabbath lamp, baking the bread, kindling the fire—all are here set forth. Here, too, are the nursing, the rearing, the training of children; the little ones gathered daily round the open book of the law, the boys and girls playing in the market-place, and the wilful lad who leaves his home and finds the land of famine.

The work of the day which has so large a place in our labour-filled lives has a proportionate place in Scripture. In the Scriptures we see the workers crowned with the tenderness of God—Ruth, sick at heart, gleaning among "the alien corn"; Paul on the beach at Miletus, lifting hands that were bent and stained with plaiting the Cilician goats' hair into tent-cloth; and Christ bearing the signature of service on toil-worn hands that were to be nailed to the cross. The call of God is addressed to men who labour in burden and toil. Moses received the divine credentials as he fed the flock of Jethro in the solitudes of Sinai,

Elisha as he ploughed his father's field, Amos as he dressed the sycomore trees, the first apostles as they mended or washed their nets, and Jesus of Nazareth as He wrought with some rude tool in the carpenter's shop.

The Scriptures face with perfect freedom all social and labour problems. The first recorded appearance of the Angel of the Covenant was to a poor slave-girl in trouble. God bore with Ahab's idolatries until that degenerate monarch filched away the vineyard of Naboth; then the Lord withdrew the sceptre from the man who had so dishonoured kingship. The compassionate eye of the Saviour marked the weariness that lined the faces of the crowd who gathered round Him at the gate of Capernaum in the evening hour; stretching hands of yearning invitation towards them, He said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." He saw the unemployed lingering in the market-place during the long hours of a working day, hoping against hope that some one would hire them, even at the eleventh hour; and He enshrined in a parable His pity for their case, giving us that parable to read; for the poor we have always with us.

In the end of the fifteenth century, in the splendour of the Italian Renaissance, Marsiglio Ficino and his circle attempted to revive the humanism of Pagan Greece and Rome. But the gay, heartless love of earth for earth's sake had died outright, and could know no resurrection. Gradually, however, a new humanism rose from the ashes of the past. Its



principle was the love of God; its central truth the Cross; its rule of life the mind which was in Christ. That new humanism, which has for its life-force the grace and passion of the thorn-crowned Man, is breaking in upon the world's night of sorrow and despair. That is the humanism of the Bible, the gospel of Jesus Christ. "Behold," saith He Who cometh to His own, "Behold, I make all things new!"

XVII

*The Living Word*

*“When Thou, O Lord, didst die upon the cross, Thou didst breathe into Thy word the Spirit of life, and didst give it power to quicken us through Thine Own precious blood, as Thou Thyself hast said: ‘The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.’”*

THE LANTERN OF LIGHT.

## XVII

### *The Living Word*

BISHOP WESTCOTT has reminded us that we cannot, in any writing, *demonstrate* the presence of inspiration. Inspiration is life: we do not prove it, we recognise it. It is true that the argument for the divine inbreathing in Scripture is conclusive up to the point that argument can reach, "yet, notwithstanding,"—to use the words of the Westminster Symbol,—“our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority of the Scriptures are from the inward work of the Holy Spirit, bearing witness by and with the word in our hearts.”

Argument, which “drags at each remove a lengthening chain,” fails to impress us in those frequently recurring and painfully exacting moods of mind in which our feelings are most deeply stirred. Our nature craves for something more immediate, something more personal.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, contemplating the prolonged series of historical testimonies which might seem to be necessary to establish the truth of the Christian religion, exclaimed, “How many men there are between God and me!” But as he attentively considered the

Scriptures he seemed to perceive a firmer ground of assurance. "The majesty of the Scriptures," he said, "astonishes me; the simplicity of the Gospels speaks to my heart."

This personal assurance, which, allying itself with reasoned proof, carries us beyond the reach of scientific demonstration, is communicated to us by the Spirit of God. It evidences itself to our consciousness as the recognition of the perfect suitability of the gospel to our deepest need. It is our apprehension of the exact correlation of the facts relating to Christ and their implications, with our cravings and aspirations. It is the spiritual vision of the Redeemer.

One who is a student of the letter, and nothing more, may find in the Scriptures only a series of raised beaches which mark the 'place where more than two thousand years ago the sea flashed and shone. One who is also an inheritor of the kingdom of God finds in them the very flood of life—an ocean depth of crystal, tinged with flame. And, indeed, the weightiest scholars may often receive from "unlearned and ignorant men" the key of knowledge, which will enable them to unlock the treasure-stores of the divine wisdom. A professor in the Sorbonne, the great theological college of France, testified that he had never understood the doctrine of the Apostle Paul until it was unfolded to him by a cobbler in Lyons. It is, as Luther says, the heart which makes the theologian. The Holy Spirit is the Interpreter. "Blessed art Thou, O Lord! teach me Thy statutes."

1. The Scriptures are alive—now, and for ever—

because they are the utterance of a changeless mind.

The spirits of the human authors were uncertain and obscure: they have now returned to God. But the Divine Author comprehended in His view the entire system of truth; and He is "the same yesterday and to-day, yea, and for ever." He is not a man that He should repent; therefore His word "is true from the beginning," and is "settled in heaven" for ever.

In certain law-books all the statutes which have been enacted by the British Parliament are set down at length. Those that are obsolete, or have been abrogated, are in one type; those which still have the force of law, are in another. These latter are alive. Let one of them be contravened, and procedure is immediately taken against the offender. So far as that individual is concerned, the whole punitive energy of statute law is roused to exact the due penalty. For, with regard to that particular enactment, the nation is to-day in the same mind as it was when, centuries ago, it may be, the royal signature attested the will of the people.

On the banks of Jordan, Joshua adjured Israel, saying, "Cursed be the man before the Lord, that riseth up and buildeth this city Jericho: with the loss of his first-born shall he lay the foundation thereof, and with the loss of his youngest son shall he set up the gates of it." Five hundred years passed, and the word spoken by Joshua seemed to have fallen dead to the earth. But Hiel the Bethelite spurned it, and, like a live wire, it shot forth sudden death—

"Hiel the Bethelite . . . laid the foundation there-

of with the loss of Abiram his first-born, and set up the gates thereof with the loss of his youngest son Segub; according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by the hand of Joshua, the son of Nun" (1 Kings xvi. 34).

Habakkuk the prophet stood upon his watch-tower, to hear what God the Lord would speak. When he had received the divine message, he wrote upon tablets the great gospel principle—

"The just shall live by his faith" (Hab. ii. 4).

This mighty sentence echoes through the New Testament as through some vast gallery, gaining always a purer resonance; during the Dark Ages it cheered the heart of "the hidden flock"; afterwards it kindled the dawn of the Reformation; in later times it inspired the faith and ardour of myriads; and it is alive unslumberingly to-day. It is quick and powerful, living and life-making.

Our Lord came to the waters of Jordan, saying, "It becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." In that word "righteousness" He comprised all the law and the prophets. He confirmed the earlier Scriptures as His own word. In the "manifesto" of His kingdom, spoken from the Mount of Beatitudes, He reviewed the revelation committed to Israel, and bound it anew on the hearts of men: "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." His own teaching He transmitted to His disciples,

registering it in heaven as of eternal validity: "The words which Thou gavest Me, I have given unto them"; and, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away."

2. The Scriptures are alive, because they contain the truth, as the truth is in Jesus.

An early English annalist tells, in fable, of St. Dunstan, that on one occasion the Apostle Peter appeared to him and committed to his care the sword of the Spirit. As the monk put out his hand to grasp the weapon, his eye was attracted by some runes which ran along the glittering blade. He bent over the writing, and read the opening words of the Fourth Gospel—"In the beginning was the Word."

The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of the Holy Book. The written Word is His investiture. Each section of Scripture is a vessel charged with His name. "These are they," said the Master, "which bear witness of Me." The radiant Figure who walks through the galleries of the Sacred Word, fulfilling every sign, and presenting Himself in innumerable aspects of tenderness and grace, is none other than He, upon whose blood-soiled garments is written that name which all may read, but none may fully comprehend—the Word of God. He is the Root of David, the bright and morning Star, the Brother born for adversity, the Prince of the kings of the earth—

He, Judah's mystic Lion,  
He, Lamb immaculate.

The characteristic of all prophecy is that it looks



to the end. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, testified, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh . . . to execute judgment upon all." From afar the seers of the first age, and the psalmists of the later time, descry the splendour of God breaking through these murky skies, and pouring the light of the eternal day upon this wearied earth. The advent cry is on every lip. "I saw a new heaven, and a new earth," is the watchword of each one. And all the way between the immediate surroundings of the sacred writers and the expected end, is sown with intimations of His presence. "As the times and the seasons pass along under His feet to go and come at His bidding," He says, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

Every fact of Scripture, finding its accomplishment in Christ, is of perpetual force, for He in whom the revelation of God consists, is alive for evermore; and the word of that revelation is the power of God.

The testimony of Jesus is not merely an unveiling of His nature. It is more even than an announcement of His mission. It is a *message* from God—a message ardent with love, and urgent with solicitation. The "voice of the Redeemer's tears" throbs in its tones. In its accents the wistfulness of the pity of God finds meet utterance. It is the ministry of reconciliation, where psalmist, and prophet, and apostle stand in the room of the risen Son of God, and in His name urge upon a guilty world the overtures of mercy: "We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be ye reconciled to God."

3. The Scriptures are alive because the Spirit of God lives in them.

The Holy Spirit, who is the Divine Author of Scripture, is God; the Bible, therefore, is the utterance of a changeless mind. This we have already seen. Also, the office and joy of the Divine Spirit is to bear witness to Christ; and Christ is the theme of the written Word. On these two grounds we are assured that the Holy Scriptures live. But the argument is not complete till we carry it on another stage. The written Word is the vehicle of the Spirit's power.

Voice of the Holy Spirit, making known  
Man to himself, a witness swift and sure,  
Warning, approving, true, and wise and pure,  
Counsel and guidance that misleadeth none!

The Holy Spirit is never revealed to the soul in pure presence. He comes as light, but He brings no new revelation. He is known by the radiance which He pours on truth that has been received by other means—the truth of our nature witnessed to in conscience, the truth of redemption disclosed in Scripture. These fields of knowledge the Spirit illuminates; in them we see the reflection of the viewless One.

This consideration enables us to understand the ejaculation of Tertullian, "I adore the plenitude of Scripture," and leads us to observe for ourselves the infinite depths and amazing grandeur of this homely Book. As one may cross the ocean a hundred times, and never touch one's former course, so one may come

a hundred times to an apparently simple passage of Scripture, and always receive a fresh revelation of the wisdom and love of God. John Owen says, with his accustomed good sense, "Everything in the Scripture is so plain as that the meanest believer may understand all that belongs unto his duty or is necessary unto his happiness; yet is nothing so plain but that the wisest of them all have reason to adore the depths and stores of divine wisdom in it."

The late Dean Church, a profound student of Dante, visited the tomb of the master at Ravenna, and laid upon the marble his well-used copy of the *Divina Commedia*, as if appealing for interpretation to the mighty spirit from whose fierce heart and glowing imagination it had come. The illustrious Florentine was dead, and his spirit was removed from men. But the child of God opens the Holy Word, and lifts it up to the Divine Author, saying, "Make Thy face to shine upon Thy servant; and teach me Thy statutes." As he prays, the answer is given; his eyes are opened to behold wondrous things in God's law. "If I meditate on any portion of Holy Writ," says Luther, "it shines and burns in my heart." "Thy word," said the Psalmist, "hath quickened me."

The Scriptures are alive. We know that it is so, on the testimony of Father, Son, and Spirit. They are alive, because they are the Word of God.

Gallery of sacred pictures manifold,  
A minster rich in holy effigies,  
And bearing on entablature and frieze  
The hieroglyphic oracles of old.

Along its transept aureoled martyrs sit ;  
And the low chancel side-lights half acquaint  
The eye with shrines of prophet, bard, and saint,  
Their golden tablets traced in holy writ !  
But only when on form and word obscure  
Falls from above the white supernal light  
We read the mystic characters aright,  
And light informs the silent portraiture,  
Until we pause at last awe-held before  
The One ineffable Face, love, wonder, and adore.

XVIII

*The First Word and the Last*

*“It is faith indeed to believe without a pledge, and to hold the heart constant at this work ; and when we doubt, to run to the Law and to the Testimony, and stay there. Madam, hold you here : here is your Father’s testament—read it ; in it He hath left to you remission of sins and life everlasting. . . . Believe, then, believe and be saved.”*

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD (To Lady Kenmore).

## XVIII

### *The First Word and the Last*

THE House of the Interpreter, as I understand Bunyan's allegory, is the Bible; the Interpreter is the Holy Spirit; the Significant Rooms are the several Scriptures which compose the Divine Library; the Grave Person whose picture hangs near the entrance is the Lord Jesus Christ. As the House stands hard by the Wicket Gate, so the believer must from the very beginning of his course devote himself to the study of God's Word. As the pilgrim knocked many times before the door was opened, so the secret treasure-stores of Scripture discover themselves only to patient search. The frequent interrogations of Christian remind us of the prayer of the Psalmist: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." And when we see him setting out upon his journey in the guidance and comfort of the Spirit, we observe the happy result of acquaintance with the Word of God.

One striking peculiarity of Scripture is that, while it covers the entire breadth of human life, it recurs incessantly to one or another of a mere handful of themes. Bengel has observed, with his unflinching acuteness,

that if we can accurately measure the significance of some twenty words, we shall be able to sound the depths of Scripture. Such words are, Righteousness, Faith, Peace, Life, Truth, Love. On these and similar terms the sacred writers never cease to discourse; they trace their employment through all the complicated movements of human experience. In a word, the burden of Scripture is "The grace of God that bringeth salvation"; the superscription of the Bible might be taken from the subscription to the Fourth Gospel: "These are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name." Nothing in our mortal life is alien from Christ; His word of redemption touches our nature at every point.

According to the allegory, it was after Graceless had entered the Wicket Gate and passed the Cross that he, known thenceforward as "Christian," came to the House of the Interpreter. He did not have the open entrance into the Scriptures of truth until he had been brought to say with tear-filled eyes—

Blest Cross, blest Sepulchre, blest rather be  
The Man who there was put to shame for me.

It is to the believer, and to him only, that the Bible becomes an unsealed book.

Of all the conceptions which find realisation in the gospel, that which is the pillar and ground of the whole is the revelation of Godhead love. As the primeval granite is in the structure of the earth, so is the love of God among the doctrines of grace.

In the archiepiscopal palace in Ravenna there is



a fresco, dating apparently from the sixth century, which represents the victorious Christ passing on in His career of conquest. In one hand He holds the Gospel-book,<sup>1</sup> in the other, the cross. These are His weapons, the might by which He overcomes. On every page of the Book of truth the red cross has set its seal. The sacred writers seem, each in turn, to say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

But the death of Christ must find its explanation in the Divine Nature: it is the act of love uncaused, eternal, unchanging—the love of the Triune God.

The word "love" is perhaps the only one which can bear us into the contemplation of the Divine Nature. When we say that God is Spirit, we think of Him as self-conscious, intelligent, active Being. When we say that He is Light, we attribute to Him certain moral qualities—an aloofness from and antagonism to sin. In neither case do we separate Him in thought from His creation. But when we declare His name to be Love, we describe the sum of His attributes, the simplicity of His perfection. Within the Godhead He is Lover, Beloved, and Love.

Into that ineffable love an eternal transaction entered, a transaction gloriously efficient through all creation, filling space and time, and reaching out to the infinite from which it came. Before creation was, a reconciliation from the disorder of sin was prepared within the life of God. In the unbeginning

<sup>1</sup> On the open page these words are inscribed, in Latin: "I am the way, the truth, and the life."

eternity, the Father gave the Son to be a sacrifice; the Spirit consecrated Him for His cross and pain; and the Son came. And when He was made manifest, He was clothed in the garments of our humiliation. The eager flame of love burned in His heart as an altar-fire. The shadow of death upon His brow was as the mystic graving on the golden plate of the priestly mitre. "Hereby know we love, because He laid down His life for us." The Cross of Christ, says Luther, is a pulpit from which the Father preaches repentance and remission of sins to a fallen race. The Cross of Christ, replies Calvin, was His triumphal chariot, to which He chained sin, death, and hell, and on which He rode home to glory. The Cross of Christ, one may add, is the earthly throne of the Eternal Love; there "grace reigns."

In the Cross of Christ love appears as grace. As the white light, pouring through the rifted cloud, scatters upon the falling rain, and flings itself in exquisite harmonies of colour against the darkness of the broken storm, so the undiversified perfection of eternal and unalterable love weaves itself into the various manifestations of the grace of God—mercy, compassion, tenderness, pity, generousness—which is as the rainbow upon the storm-cloud, the seal of God upon the covenant ordered and sure. Thus we have offered to us what Milton calls "the enormous bliss" of the promises—

And forasmuch Thy brow is crossed  
 With death-drops from the deathful tree,  
 We take Thee for our only trust,  
 O dying Charitie!"

In the early years of the seventeenth century, Ezekiel Culverwell, Vicar of Felsted, in Essex, gathered out of the Scriptures all the great gospel texts, and begun to piece them together into a treatise on the life of faith. He had not proceeded far when he discovered that the central word round which the others naturally took their subordinate places was, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). And so, the master-thought of his treatise is—God gave His Son to sinners of mankind in a grant or deed of gift.

Here, in truth, is the heart of the gospel; and here the persistent appeal of the Word of God concentrates itself.

Christ is given. He is not merely offered; He is bestowed, the gift of the Father's love. He was given in the *Incarnation*, when He took our nature, and suffered the limitations of our earthly life. He was given in His blessed *Ministry*, when He went about doing good, spending all and being altogether spent for the suffering and the sinful. He was given in His *Death*, when He lifted the world's load of care, and shame, and guilt, and bore it on His aching heart, until He cried in the pangs of desolation, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?": then bowed His head upon His finished work, and died.

And those to whom He was given, sinners of Adam's race, are invited to receive Him. An eminent preacher once said, "There is only one thing to which an unpardoned sinner has a right." A plain man in

the audience said to himself, "I wonder what that can be." And when the preacher added, "The blood of Christ," he understood, and believed.

Vavasor Powell, a young clergyman in Wales in the days of the Long Parliament, was startled from a life of self-pleasing, and brought into a state of true repentance, "deep sighs and bitter tears, self-loathing, and self-abasing." During four years he wandered through mazes of doubt and fear; then the Lord looked upon him, and commanded peace. "Whilst I was in this agony," he writes, "the God of all grace . . . did about noon present to me that Scripture, John iii. 36—'*He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life*'; which words were then revealed to me, and opened thus: First, that there was nothing necessary to salvation but only believing in Christ. Secondly, that to such as did believe in Christ there was certainty of salvation." He believed, and in the act of faith he received the peace of God.

It is in believing that the soul finds rest. Certainly, in all true faith submission to our Lord's authority is present. But it is the apprehension of Christ as Redeemer, which is, strictly speaking, the act of affiance. Dr. Dale puts this clearly and well when he says that "Faith is rather the answer of the soul to a revelation of grace than the submission of the soul to the assertion of authority."

But as soon as the sinner has apprehended the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, all the powers of his nature are committed to the good and acceptable will of God, our Saviour. The opening words of the Palatine

Catechism are : " My only comfort in life and in death is, that in soul and body, whether I live or die, I am not mine own, but I belong unto my most faithful Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ." And so the life is yielded up in love and gratitude to Him who by His most precious blood has fully satisfied for sin.

Methought I heard one calling, Child !  
And I replied, My Lord !

Dr. Brown, late of Bedford, tells of one of the pilgrim fathers, Judge Sewell, to whom was entrusted the duty of leading the praise in the church in Boston. The " Bay Psalm Book " contained only some dozen tunes, but this good man at times found the selection to be so numerous as to become bewildering. In his diary, which has been preserved, he notes with much simplicity his successes and failures. Occasionally he thinks that he has " set the psalm well " ; at other times he writes, " The Lord humble me and instruct me." Once, when he " intended Windsor," he " fell into High Dutch." Of another day he observes, " In the morning I set York tune, and in the second going over the gallery carried it irresistibly to St. David's, which discouraged me very much." And so it often was : but on a certain Sunday he says, " The song of the fifth Revelation was sung. I was ready to burst into tears at the words, ' Bought with Thy blood.' " I think that on that day the strident tones and quavering notes of the venerable precentor must have been well-nigh subdued to the melody of heaven. And surely to this strain the life of the ransomed evermore holds true : " Thou art worthy . . . for Thou

wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, . . . and hast made us unto our God kings and priests."

The first word of Scripture, as the last, is: "That ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name."