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no true relation to sin. Even if the sacrifices be supposed to remove the guilt of particular sins, the need of repeating them is proof enough that they cannot touch the roots of sin. The man he needs to speak for him to God is, if it be possible, a priest of a better sort, not constituted by custom or by positive law, but by personal character, for no common sinner can be supposed to do effectually what these conventional sacrifices only do in a limited and superficial way.

3. These two needs are conspicuous in history, and most religions have aimed at the ideals corresponding to them. A third, which is no less real, though less prominent in past ages, seems likely to be more and more distinctly recognized in the future. The average man is not quite unconscious of his deep estrangement from his fellow-men. He may get on with his neighbours, and even with his kinsmen at the ends of the earth; though we hear of class divisions and family quarrels, and have ample experience that the closest of all ties has no charm that cannot be broken by bitter hatred. Still less are nations united. The very links of commerce, religion, and general intercourse that bring them together are turned into occasions for quarrels. The civilized world has not quite outgrown the old heathen feeling that the stranger is an enemy, and that coloured people at any rate are made to be plundered by their betters.

But this is not the power of the future. Though the nations hate each other more actively than they did half a century ago, there is more unity among them, and more consciousness of unity. Commerce is international, so is thought, and so is civilization generally; so that civilized people all over the world are growing more like each other in manners, in administration, and in ways of thinking. The forces of the future make for unity, and are seen to make for unity. The value of the individual, which is our great inheritance from the nineteenth century, gave new value to the nations in which he is grouped.

We are all agreed, except the pessimists, that some uplifting force is working in the world. Whether we call it divine or not, no others will dispute the action of such a force in geological and in historic times; and no Theist will feel it safe to place limits on the possibilities of its future working. Nor will any ideal fairly indicated by the deepest needs of human nature seem impossible to those who measure the ages of the future by the ages of the past; and even less will those dismiss it as a dream who believe in the life after death which is postulated by every human thought and every human feeling which is not entirely bestial.¹

¹ H. M. Gwatkin, *The Knowledge of God*.

The Hebrew Prophet and the Christian Preacher.

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THERE are Christian preachers who know so well the Bible and the soul of man that they are never at a loss for a subject or a text on which to preach. In their study and meditation the Bible and the soul of man so respond to one another, deep answering unto deep, that they can always find a message from the one for the other. But this is not the happy lot of all preachers, and there are some who are glad of suggestion and direction in regard to the best method of carrying on their work with profit to their hearers and without strain to themselves. As a result of my own personal experience in recent years, I should like to call the attention of such of my brethren as

may feel this need to what seems to me an inexhaustible source of material for the pulpit. Doubtless this has often been done before, but a fresh treatment of an old subject may sometimes serve to revive a lacking interest.

I. I have been led during the war, and even since the peace, to turn more to the Hebrew prophets than I ever did during my previous ministry. While trying to keep myself, as far as I could, abreast of what modern scholarship had to tell about the Old Testament, I must confess that my dominant, and sometimes almost exclusive, interest was in the New, especially the Gospels, the Person and Work of Jesus Christ our Lord.

That interest has not in any way declined, but the interest in the Old Testament has increased for three reasons. (i.) During the war and even since the peace the duty of the Christian Church towards the nation has gained a fresh emphasis. I have always been interested in, and an advocate of, social reform; and my preaching has, I fear, been sometimes a scandal to the hearers, who want 'no politics in the pulpit.' But the position of the nation and of other nations during the war was so tragic and perilous, and still is so ominous, that even in the interests of the Kingdom of God itself apart from the motives of patriotism, which a Christian minister should feel no less than any other citizen, it seemed a duty to deal with national affairs from the standpoint of religion and morals. Now the Hebrew prophets addressed themselves to the nation, the judgment they threatened or the mercy they promised was for the nation. Individualism and universalism do emerge in Jeremiah and Ezekiel; but the note that is usually struck is a nationalism, which is both moral and religious, and not less real or intense because thus restrained. Their utterances have thus a special fitness for the times in which we live. (ii.) Not only do times of security, prosperity, and progress in a nation lay less constraint on the preacher to deal with national affairs, but such conditions offer less likeness to the circumstances amid which the Hebrew prophets delivered their message. It was in periods of danger, disturbance, distress, and even despair, that the prophets stepped forth to interpret the course of human events as the purpose of divine providence in judgment or mercy. While the resemblance of conditions during the war might be closer than since the peace, yet even at home and still more abroad the position remains very unstable and even precarious; and thus a striking correspondence between the circumstances of the Hebrew prophet and the Christian preacher to-day still remains. (iii.) While the prophets addressed themselves to their own people and age, and should probably have been surprised to learn how permanent and universal their influence was to become, yet as they spoke in time and place for the eternal and infinite God, their warnings or their encouragements express moral and religious principles which are valid for all peoples and all ages. Because they spoke to a nation in circumstances similar to our own, the principles

they enunciated have meaning and worth for us.

2. An objection may readily be made which needs to be answered at once. It may be said: Why go to the Old Testament at all? Is not the Christian ideal presented in the New Testament, and for that and that alone the Christian Church should witness? This objection may be met by several considerations. (i.) The Christian ideal should not be isolated from its historical background in the Old Testament. In nature and history alike no stage of an evolution should be cut off from the previous stages, as by knowing them we can best understand it. Jesus did not so separate Himself; He came not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil, and that means not merely to supersede, or to correct imperfection, but to continue in the new all that in the old is consistent with it, and even complementary to it. It was the mistake of the pacifists, it seems to me, that they so isolated Jesus and His teaching. There was a revelation of God to the Hebrew nation which in morals and religion alike was the preparation, and the necessary preparation, for Him. We do not apprehend the Christian ideal fully unless we take account of its antecedents in law and prophecy. (ii.) Paul in his vigorous polemic opposed Law and Gospel; we must not so oppose the Old and the New Testament; there are resemblances as well as differences, there is continuity as well as change. Christian religion and morals have certainly suffered in the past from an indiscriminate use of the Old Testament. During the war even the Old Testament was used to justify a temper which was not at all Christian. The practices recorded in the Book of Judges are not precedents for the Christian Church; no circumstances could give the Imprecatory Psalms a legitimate place in Christian worship. But the prophets do not represent the lower popular religion and morals. They are the agents of the progressive revelation which ends in Christ. They have their imperfections and limitations from the Christian standpoint; and nevertheless their affinities with the Christian ideal are often very striking. If we know how to trace the line of advance in the teaching of the Old Testament, we shall be able to distinguish the utterances that belong to the temporary and local conditions from those which anticipate the voice of the Son speaking in the name of the Father. It is indeed.

surprising how far the prophets are in advance of their contemporaries, and how far they reach forward to clasp hands with Jesus and His disciples. They utter truths about God and goodness that can never be superseded, but will ever come as an authentic revelation from God to men. (iii.) For the reasons given in the preceding section, the utterances of the prophets have a special interest and authority for us to-day. They do interpret the course of human history as the purpose of the divine providence, but they do not, as some preachers seemed to assume, represent that purpose as exclusively, or even dominantly, judgment, for they speak by preference of mercy. They are messengers of life as well as heralds of doom. In this respect they can serve to correct a prevailing tendency. If there was some excuse for preachers during the war declaring with vehemence that God doeth terrible things in His righteousness, there is no justification for their now forgetting that judgment is His strange work, but in mercy is His delight. There was not a little Pharisaism in the way in which Germany alone was regarded as the sinner among the nations, and the Allies as the unspotted champions of the cause of God. The policy of this nation since the armistice gives meaning for us to the warnings of the prophets against national self-righteousness; and the woeful condition of the greater part of the world bids us turn to-day to the assurances given by the prophets to a penitent and believing people of the loving-kindness and tender mercy of God.

3. Enough, it is to be hoped, has been said to prove that the Christian preacher to-day may find many a word in season in the utterances of the Hebrew prophets. Before giving some illustrations to confirm the thesis, a word or two may be said about the way in which the prophets may be used. (i.) It is necessary that in a brief introduction the historical position of the prophet should be described in so far as may be needful to make his utterance both interesting and intelligible; but care should be taken not to make the introduction so long as to distract attention from the truth which his saying expresses. So few and so brief are the opportunities of the Christian preacher to deliver to his hearers the message of faith or duty with which he is charged, that his interest as a scholar should not be allowed to misguide him into a disproportionate treatment of the circum-

stances of the prophet. Exposition of the Bible, important and valuable as that is, must be made subordinate to preaching the gospel, that is, delivering that witness about moral and spiritual reality of God and goodness, which can be the power and wisdom of God unto salvation. Not the intellectual curiosity of the preacher, but the practical necessity of his hearers should be the measure of his treatment of the history needing to be known that prophecy may be understood. (ii.) It is necessary also that the prophetic utterance be interpreted historically, that the preacher should not impose his meaning on the words, and leave his hearers under the impression that he is giving the meaning of the prophet. The short cut here is the longest way round. The preacher will find most meaning for himself and his hearers, if he will try to find out as exhaustively as he can just what the prophet meant. Preachers can get not only their texts, but even the contents of their sermons, out of the Bible. What a Hosea or a Jeremiah meant is much more valuable morally and spiritually than what men of less genius can make them mean. If preaching be, as Phillips Brooks rightly describes it, truth through personality, the prophet's personality no less than the preacher's should be so reproduced as to become the appropriate and effective medium of the truth. It seems to me that psychological insight can here add a great deal to scholarly knowledge. The experience of the prophet has to be relived if the teaching of the prophet is to be made living. Men have a keener interest in personality than in truth, the concrete reality than the abstract conception; and a doctrine will appeal to them when presented as an experience, and a duty when it is embodied in a character. The failure of a great deal of preaching is that it is thought divorced from life. (iii.) Most necessary, however, is it that the sermon shall not be only a historical or a psychological study. It is truth for to-day that the Christian preacher is concerned with. When he has laid hold of the truth in the prophet's utterance, he must apply it fully and freely to the needs of his own hearers. So long as he makes clear the distinction of the historical exposition and the practical application, he need not be over-scrupulous to confine himself rigidly within the bounds of the prophet's horizon. He need not ignore the fact that Christ has come, and has made all things new. He can look at the

prophetic principles in the light of the Christian ideal. The promise he can interpret through the fulfilment. The circumstances of his own time, and not of the prophet's, must determine in what way he shall apply the truth, although his knowledge of the latter may often help him to an understanding of the former, and *vice versa*. If he must try to relive the prophet's age, he must still more be thoroughly alive to his own age. Most of all, he must be able on the wings of the prophet's inspiration, or of the aspirations of his own soul, to soar above both the prophet's and his own age into those heavenly places where Christ sits at the right hand of God, that it may be nothing else and less than the word of the Lord which he brings to his own generation, as the prophet did to his.

4. In offering a few illustrations of how the Christian preacher may use the Hebrew prophet, I shall not attempt to fulfil either the first or the second of the three requirements just mentioned, but shall assume that all my readers are sufficiently students of the Bible to do both for themselves, and shall confine myself to a few suggestions in regard to the third requirement only. (i.) The words of Am 3², 'You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities,' teach *the penalty of privilege*. The greater the opportunity the greater the obligation and responsibility, and consequently the greater must be the judgment if the opportunity is neglected, the obligation denied, the responsibility disregarded. Great Britain holds a position among the nations to-day such as no other nation holds; many are proud, and make a boast of that position, as did Israel of the divine election. Many are the ways in which this warning can be applied to it. (ii.) The declaration of Hos 2¹⁶, 'And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the Lord, that thou shalt call me Ishi, and shalt no more call me Baali,' illustrates the fact that *religious progress depends on a new conception of God*. Until the people thought of God as his own grievous experience had taught the prophet to think, there could not be the religious revival and consequent moral reformation which was needed. We cannot supersede or transcend the conception of God as Father given by Jesus Christ as Son; but the Christian Church may need, as it often has, to rise above an imperfect apprehension of that revelation to a more

adequate. That seems to me to be a very urgent need of the present time. Among many people, and even Christian ministers, the period of the war was marked by a theological reaction. God was thought of as Judge rather than as Father, and a corresponding attitude was assumed as the duty of men. What is needed to-day is the full recovery of the Christian conception of God, anticipated as that has been by Hosea. Tenderness, gentleness, forbearance, and forgiveness are the urgent moral needs among men in a world which has not recovered, is all too slowly recovering, from the calamity through which it has passed. Such a doctrine as Hosea's, rooted in such an experience as his, is the message for the hour. We shall not recover the Christian conception of God till we return to the Christian attitude to our fellow-men. (iii.) The oft-quoted and oft-misunderstood saying of Mic 6⁸:

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?

does not substitute morality for religion as seems often to be assumed, but shows rather that outward conduct depends on inward character, and inward character on personal communion with God. A man will do justly only as he loves mercy, and he will love mercy only as he walks humbly with his God. The demand to-day is for *social reconstruction*, the doing justly. Here is the summons to the Christian preacher to show that there must be *moral reformation*, the motives of all men and all classes must be changed from selfishness to unselfishness; and this change can only be brought about by *religious revival*, a return of the nation to God. (iv.) Whether the oracle in Is 19²³⁻²⁵ belongs to the prophet of Jerusalem, or must be assigned to a later age, it is assuredly a remarkable anticipation of the aspirations of the best minds of to-day for the League of Nations. Freedom of intercourse, friendly alliance, cessation of war are all represented as resting on a common faith, because of which past enmities can no longer divide. What a rebuke of failure and summons to endeavour for a divided Christendom the prophet's vision is! Does it not lay a special obligation on the Christian preacher, not only to be an enthusiastic advocate of the League of Nations, but also to urge the necessary plea that

only a Christian universalism can inspire an enduring and effective internationalism which shall make an end of war? (v.) What is most needed to-day in religion, morals, and all other higher interests of mankind is a courageous progress. So changed is the world, that a return to the old routine is impossible. What a rebuke to a timid conservatism which clings to the past, and fears the changes the future may bring, is Jeremiah's doctrine of the new covenant (31⁸⁸⁻⁹⁴). Sacred as was the old covenant of Sinai, the prophet frankly recognizes its insufficiency for his own age, and freely anticipates another kind of covenant more suited to its needs. As Jesus confirms the prophet's anticipation, his view of the relation of God to man has permanent value; it is inward, individual, universal, and redemptive. Each of these features has significance for the conditions of our own time. (vi.) An assurance of hope and a summons to duty for the Church comes in Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones (37³⁻⁵). The mood of despondency regarding the spiritual condition of the nation and even the Church is rebuked both by the call to carry on the work of preaching, and the assurance that God has the spiritual resources for a religious revival such as is so much needed. As in the past, religious revival has followed on the proclamation freshly of a forgotten or neglected truth, the question arises, What is it that the Church must prophesy? The times at least suggest that it is the Kingdom

of God as a world-wide reconstruction of human society according to the Christian ideal of human brotherhood in Christ.

5. These are only a few of the illustrations I might draw from the much larger number of prophetic utterances which I have found helpful as preacher, and which hearers in many congregations have assured me that they have found helpful. As in Ezekiel's vision he was bidden prophesy, that is, go on with his work as preacher, in order that the dry bones might live by the breath of the Lord, so must the Church to-day not despair of preaching as a means of grace; but must seek to make its preaching prophecy, that is, inspired and inspiring utterance. I am convinced that the Church is suffering loss to-day from the literary essay, the oratorical display, the philosophical disquisition, or the poetic idyll in the pulpit. What is wanted is simple, straight, strong speech about the realities of God and man, grace and sin, duty and destiny by men who are real themselves, and so can make these realities real to their hearers. As the Spirit of God has not been withdrawn from the Church, the Christian preacher may dare to hope, and even believe, that he too can be inspired as was the Hebrew prophet, so that his preaching shall be inspiring, making the dry bones in the Church and the world live. And this inspiration may come to him as he studies honestly that he may use courageously the utterances of the Hebrew prophets.

Contributions and Comments.

A Human Original for 'Satan.'

A COMPARISON of the incidents in Ezr 5 with the vision in Zec 3 suggests that the former may have been the historical background of, and provided the vocabulary for, the latter. They were admittedly contemporaneous. Tattenai would thus figure as the original of the character Satan, Darius as the Angel of the Lord ('a sort of Grand Vizier among the angels'), the interferences of Ezr 5^{3,6} as functions of the Adversary, and the words 'Be ye far from thence' (6⁶)—so unexpected a reproof—as the earthly counterpart to the heavenly words 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.' Already it is

recognized that the plucking of the brand out of the fire refers to the release of the exiles, and that the 'filthy garments' typify the unrestored ruins: so, for instance, Dr. Sir G. A. Smith, who, however does not, so far as I know, suggest that Zechariah's thankfulness for relief from Tattenai's powerful interference may have induced the attitude of receptivity for this particular vision.

Further, these incidents, together with this prophetic narrative, occur at the very beginning of the post-exilic period. Hence all the other O.T. references to Satan (Ps 109⁶, Job 1⁶ etc., 1 Ch 21¹—contrast the pre-exilic 2 S 24¹) are subsequent to, and therefore almost certainly influenced by,