

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *Journal of the Transactions of the Victoria Institute* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jtvi-01.php

JOURNAL OF
THE TRANSACTIONS
OF
The Victoria Institute,
OR,
Philosophical Society of Great Britain.

SECRETARY: E. WALTER MAUNDER, F.R.A.S.

VOL. XLVIII.



LONDON:

(Published by the Institute, 1, Central Buildings, Westminster, S.W.)

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

1916.

576TH ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING,

HELD IN COMMITTEE ROOM B, THE CENTRAL HALL,
WESTMINSTER, ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 21st, 1916,
AT 4.30 P.M.

THE VENERABLE ARCHDEACON BERESFORD POTTER, M.A.,
TOOK THE CHAIR:

The Minutes of the preceding Meeting were read and confirmed.

The SECRETARY announced the election of Sir Charles Thomas Dyke Acland, Bart., M.A., M.P., and Mrs. Adelaide E. Piesse as Associates of the Institute.

The CHAIRMAN introduced the Rev. A. H. T. Clarke, M.A., and invited him to address the Meeting on "The Fulfilment of Prophecy."

THE FULFILMENT OF PROPHECY. By the Rev.
A. H. T. CLARKE, M.A.

(*Abstract.*)

WHAT is PROPHECY? *How* is it FULFILLED?

1. It is essentially *insight* into God's dealings with mankind and therefore issues in *foresight* as to their natural outcome. *God is always the same*: "I am, Who am"; "I am the Lord, I change not." *And man is always the same.* His "history," therefore, "is ever repeating itself." The first Man was a type and prophecy of all men. The Jewish Church was a type (*τύπος*, I Cor. x, 11) and prophecy of the Christian Church of all time ("the Israel of God," Gal. vi, 16). And the special gift of prophecy lies in declaring the issues of God's eternal counsels as they appear in the midst of time. It is the result of the illumination of the spirit of man by the Spirit of God (I Cor. ii, 9-12; II Pet. i, 20, 21). "He spake by the Prophets." "When He is come . . . He will shew you things to come," cp. Rev. i, 1-3.

2. As every nation has its special gift of law, science, art, rulership, poetry or philosophy, held in trust for the world, so God chose the Jews for the special gift of Revelation. "Salvation is of the Jews." "Unto them were committed the oracles of God." Their whole race and fortunes were a prophecy of

Messiah to come (Hos. xi, 1, with Matt. ii, 15). "To Him bore all their Prophets witness." "The testimony to Jesus is the spirit of Prophecy." The Desire of Nations was specially and exclusively revealed to them in any distinctness. It was "of them Christ came, Who is God," "It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah." The temporal promises to Abraham, to Solomon, to Hezekiah, even to Cyrus, were only to be revealed through them. They alone were God's elect vessels and chosen channels, the sole organs of His revealed will (Isa. xlix, 6, cp. Acts xiii, 47, and Rom. ii, 17, 18). They alone supplied the "men of revelation" (Dillmann). Hence, also, all Prophecy becomes essentially Messianic (Augustine). Christ is its goal (τέλος, Rom. x, 4) both in His first coming and His second (Eph. i, 10).

3. Hence Prophecy, expanding with the growing experience of the Jewish nation, never exhausts itself in a single fulfilment (*ἰδιὰς ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται*, II Pet. i, 20). Prophecy, like history, repeats itself in cycles of analogous experiences, *e.g.*, Ahitophel's treachery to the Messianic King David (Pss. lxxix and cix) repeats itself in principle in the treachery of Judas to Christ (Acts i, 16-20); later, in the treachery of the Jewish Church to the Christian Church (Acts v, 17; vi, 9; xv, 1; Gal. ii, 11; iv, 17); last of all, in the treachery of the apostate Christian Church to the Truth itself (I John ii, 18, 19). This is the ANTICHRIST foreshadowed in all St. John's writings. "The day of the Lord," always at hand in the rise and fall of nations, will culminate in one final great "DAY" of Judgment.

4. But are there to be no final fulfilments before the end? Is there no open vision of the whole without this complicated cross-reference to all time? Are there no definite stepping-stones in time to ease us in this march of God across history? Yes, there are, it is true, certain historical fulfilments of doom upon ancient nations like Tyre, Babylon, Egypt, Edom, Nineveh, fulfilled to the very letter. But that letter is to be reinterpreted *by analogy* so as to apply to all nations who shall take up the same standpoint and represent the same principles. These nations were picked out by the bold hand of prophecy that they might be a warning to future nations whose principles they represented.

5. The application of this to modern Europe, *e.g.*:—

(a) *Business fraud.* See Hos. xii, 7-8; Amos viii, 4-10.

(b) *Treachery.* See Amos v, 3, 4, and 10-13 (repeated by our Lord over Jerusalem in His day and by St. John over the Church of the future).

(c) *Over Prosperity* requiring the surgeon's knife of War. See Amos vi, 1-11, 13-14.

(d) *Worship of Wealth.* Zeph. i, 4-12, 17-19.

(e) *Spiritual indifference among the Clergy for their duties.* See Mal. i, 6-ii, 9; iii, 7-10.

(f) *Picture of the modern Prussian character in the ancient Chaldeans.* See Hab. i, 2-17 and ii, 4-17.

6. We are witnessing now the break-up of old Europe—the Europe of Cæsar, of Charlemagne, of the Papacy and old Feudalism. The German nation is once more employed in the process, as it was in the days before Cæsar's Empire fell. May we not see in these things the exhaustion of the Gentile power “in order that the way of the Kings of the East”—that is, the empires of China and Japan, of India and Africa—“may be prepared,” and that the Jews may return to their own land once more as the head of the nations before the end come?

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN said that he thought the Lecturer had rendered them a service by pointing out the constantly recurring fulfilments of prophecy. Past writers on prophecy had spoken of the “double sense,” but there was more than a “double sense.” The Hebrew words used to denote a prophet indicated the real meaning of prophecy, just as the Greek words used in the New Testament for miracle made clear the true meaning to be attached to that word. One Hebrew word used meant “a seer,” and was translated in the Septuagint by a Greek word derived from the verb which means “to see.” Consequently a prophet was a man inspired above his fellows to see the laws regulating God's control of the universe. Another Hebrew word translated prophet signified “to proclaim,” and was translated in the Septuagint by a word which means “to speak forth” or “proclaim.” So the prophet proclaimed to the world what he was inspired to see, viz., the great principles of God's governance of man and the world. These were constantly being fulfilled in the past, the present, and the future. For God never changes. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. And prophets still exist—men who see deep spiritual realities and laws, and consequently can foretell what will inevitably happen if certain courses are pursued. God speaks through them now as in the olden time.

Mr. ROUSE agreed with the Lecturer that some prophecies of the Old Testament had, and were intended to have, two fulfilments, the more distant one being the more important. This was the case with the fate of Ahitophel, foretold in Psalm lxxix and elsewhere, and of Judas Iscariot, for like treachery. But the Lecturer further claimed that prophecies were usually of a comprehensive character, with many possible fulfilments. In his survey of the subject, however, he had passed without notice numerous examples of prophecy which had a specific and individual reference only, such as the information which Samuel gave to Saul about the discovery of his father's asses, and the prophecy of Elisha that food should be plentiful in Samaria the next day. The Lecturer further made unnecessary difficulty in finding the fulfilment of the Lord's prophecies recorded in Matthew xxiv, Mark xiii, and Luke xxi. A careful perusal of the passages would show that our Lord was replying to three questions which His disciples had asked him, and that Luke recorded the answer to one question and described the siege of Jerusalem under Titus, while Matthew and Mark recorded His prophecy of the final siege of Jerusalem and the tribulation which had been foretold in Zechariah xii and xiv.

Mr. MAUNDER differed from Mr. Rouse in his criticism of the Lecturer for omitting all allusion to unimportant details of prophecy. The subject before them that afternoon was a very wide one, and the Lecturer had been wise in seeking to avoid minor details and confining himself to broad principles.

There were two elements in prophecy, the Divine and the human. God Himself was the Origin and Fount of prophecy, but He used men to speak it forth, and men were able to lend themselves to this Divine usage.

He would invite the Meeting to consider how the three subjects which they had discussed at this and the two previous Meetings illustrated each other. Philosophers had told us that one man, speaking to another and using certain words, had no security that those words had the same meaning to his hearer that they had to himself. As a matter of logic this might be true; as a matter of practice, we do unquestionably have intercourse and communion with each other. So the miracle is continually being repeated that a little child, with its budding intelligence, learns to understand and to speak a language no word of which it understands by nature, and

an analogous miracle is performed when the Bible is translated into languages that do not contain words to express many of its meanings, and it is understood by races that had no such ideas before. May we not carry the analogy further? Prophecy is God speaking through men to men, but His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. Necessarily, therefore, prophecy must always present difficulties to us: it calls for the exertion of spiritual intelligence on the part of the recipient; we have to learn a language which is foreign to us, conveying ideas which have had no previous part in us. Then at our last Meeting we had brought before us the unity of the spirit of prophecy from beginning to end of the book of Isaiah brought out in a wonderful fashion, and it was shown how God had revealed His purpose with mankind so many generations ago.

Mr. GRAHAM supported the view of the Lecturer that God revealed *through* the prophet—not *to* the prophet—that which concerned His will in times to come. In its germinative nature prophecy was capable of various fulfilments. But the key to all was the knowledge of the intention of God to reveal Himself to the creature He made for the purpose by the incarnation of His only begotten Son. That purpose was apart from redemption, but as redemption had been made necessary by Adam's fall, so God's purpose was wrought out in it. Hence all prophecy must point to Jesus Christ, and will eventually find its full accomplishment at His coming again.

Mr. SIDNEY COLLETT said: The Lecturer first told us that we were entirely dependent upon German theologians for a right understanding of the prophecies of the Bible.

It is very difficult to comprehend how such a statement could be made, in view of the fact that it was that very German theology, which was probably more responsible than anything else for the lack of faith and materialism which was blighting our land to-day.

No, the truth is, we are not dependent upon any human teachers in such matters. The Divine Author of the prophecies is also our Divine Teacher, see 1 John ii, 27: "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and *ye need not that any man teach you.*"

Then, I could not agree with the Lecturer's remark that: "the writers of the Bible had more than their ordinary share of human

failings!" It is true that the Holy Spirit, in His Word, has given us a Divinely faithful record of their lives, without any attempt at "hushing up" their faults, as a merely human writer would have done. But, that same Holy Spirit gives us their true character in II Peter i, 21, as "*holy men of God*"!

Nor could I follow Mr. Clarke in, what seemed to be the essence of his Lecture, that prophecy was to be traced to some "insight" on the part of the prophets.

This seems to me, if I may humbly say so, altogether wrong. For, in the first place, the prophets did not always understand their own prophecies! and apparently had, at times, to study their own writings, in order to understand the meaning of the Spirit's message through themselves. See I Peter i, 10, 11.

But, more than that, we are clearly told in II Peter i, 21, just how prophecy *did* come, viz:—"holy men of God spake as *they were moved by the Holy Ghost*." And the word rendered "moved" really means swept along as by an irresistible torrent! which is the very opposite of anything in the nature of personal "insight."

I am sorry to have to say that,—as it seemed to me,—the Lecturer failed to give due importance to the work of the Holy Spirit in the inspiration of the Scriptures, and that lies at the very foundation of our faith. (See II Timothy iii, 16.)

The Rev. JOHN TUCKWELL said: I am sure we must all be grateful for the very able paper to which we have just listened. At the same time there were one or two details upon which we could not all quite agree.

First of all, I do not think the Lecturer did full justice to II Peter i, 20. The word which is rendered "private" (*ἰδιος*) means that which is "a man's own," and the word "personal" would beyond all dispute quite correctly represent it. The word rendered "interpretation" is nowhere else used in the New Testament. It is derived from the verb *ἐπιλύω*, meaning "to release," "to loose," "to untie." The noun here used would thus carry in it the meaning of "a release," "a loosening," "a setting free," and in the matter of speech "an utterance," "an expression." The sense of the passage is thus, "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private or personal utterance." This is fully borne out by the next verse, which reads: "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of

man, but holy men of God spake as they were borne up by the Holy Ghost."

Again, I do not think the Lecturer made enough of the fact that prophecy in Scripture is distinctly represented as that which is supernatural and Divine. Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, xviii, 22, said "when a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken."

Scripture prophecy is thus something far more than the shrewd guess of a political prophet. We have an illustration in Daniel ii, where we are told how Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of the three great kingdoms that should succeed that of Babylon. After the last of these, we are told that "the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed," and we may be sure that that prophecy will be fulfilled, even as the prophecy of the preceding kingdoms was. This surely is supernatural knowledge, and not merely the foresight of political sagacity.

A hearty vote of thanks was passed to the Lecturer, who replied briefly to the criticisms which had been made, and the Meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.