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R. L. CHILD, M.A., B.D., B.Litt. Principal, Regent's Park College.
President-Elect, Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.

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see it, is that, as Christians, we should more and more study the Bible in fellowship, so that Roman Catholics and Protestants, Baptists and Anglicans bring their minds together to its light. The real reason why conscientious Christians draw apparently contradictory conclusions from the Bible is not usually that one group is entirely right, and all the rest are wrong, or self-deceived. It is that the truth embodied in the Bible like the truth embodied in life, transcends the grasp of us all. We need to share with one another the insights which God gives to us.

Admittedly, the authority which emerges from such a study will be of a different kind from that of former days, but it will be more deeply rooted in reality. It will be less dogmatic in its claims, less confident in its assertions. Its edges will not be so sharp and clear-cut. But I believe it will be more healthy and enduring, in so far as it represents the conventions of minds freely responding to the Spirit Who has been promised to us to lead us into all truth. It will be the treasured possession of hearts drawn nearer to one another and to God by a realisation of our common need of Him, and our dependence upon the One Who is alone the Way, the Truth and the Life.

R. L. CHILD.

THE MINISTER AND HIS BIBLE

A PROTESTANT minister is pre-eminently a minister of the Word. He is a man with a Book. From that Book he derives his message and authority. Through it he learns of his Lord. It is his constant companion. It is also, if he will admit it, a source of no little anxiety to him.

W. N. Clarke wrote: "I tell no secret when I say that to the average minister to-day the Bible that lies on his pulpit is more or less an unsolved problem. He is loyal to it. Yet he is not entirely free to use it throughout as God's very word to men now living; he retains the feeling that he ought, but he cannot. So he leaves some parts unused, and he is not quite sure how much of the remainder he may freely wield as the sword of the Spirit."*

There can be little doubt that Clarke's observation is still valid. The writer of these lines has experienced no little perplexity of the kind referred to. The following broad principles seem to him to be relevant to the issues involved.

1. THE BIBLE AND REVELATION.

Most will agree that the Bible is not to be equated with Revelation but is the record of Revelation. The moot point is: What is revelation?

Nygren distinguishes two views, the Biblical and the intellectualist. The latter affirms: "We have received new

*"The Use of the Scriptures in Theology," pp. 161-2.

truths which we did not know before." The former speaks in terms like those of Isaiah, "The Lord hath made bare (revealed) His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations." That is, Revelation is fundamentally the act of God for man's redemption and finds its culmination in Christ.

Yet an act of God which conveyed no "truth" to those on whose behalf it was done would have misfired, for they would have misunderstood it. We accordingly distinguish the following elements in the process of revelation: (i) An event of salvation or of judgment; (ii) An interpretation of the significance of the event; (iii) A demand for a response from man; (iv) A declaration (as provided in the Bible) of this complex of event-interpretation-demand, which sets following generations in the position of the original recipients and so continues the revelation with its corresponding demand.

In this chain of revelation undoubtedly (i) and (ii) are crucial, but they are unthinkable without (iii) and they would be meaningless, as revelation, for all subsequent ages without (iv). We may illustrate the process in relation to the cardinal moments of revelation.

The supreme crisis of revelation in the Old Testament is undoubtedly the Exodus. God laid bare His holy arm to deliver the Jewish tribes, and deliver them He did. But the action was not unannounced. A prophet, Moses, was present to interpret the event to the people. The climax of the event came at Sinai, when the nation accepted the covenant of God and pledged their obedience. In that moment they became, in truth, the people of God. To every succeeding generation the story was related and from it response was demanded.

Failure to make the appropriate response led to the next greatest revelatory event of Old Testament times, viz., the Exile. God declared He would judge His people. Once more His arm was laid bare, this time to scatter and not to save. The judgment was as truly revelatory as the redemption—compare the refrain of Ezekiel, as he pitilessly and even exultingly describes its coming: "Then shall ye know that I am the Lord." God in His might and holiness was revealed, and His prophets interpreted the act. The purpose, however, was still to elicit a response from the objects of revelation. God's people must repent. There was to be another Exodus, a regathering of the scattered tribes, a renewal of primeval devotion in the desert, and by the power of God the awaited kingdom was to come. The Old Testament closes with the hope of coming redemption and ensures a people prepared for it.

Christ's coming fulfils this hope so completely that He may be said to be the revelation of God. Notice, however, that the New Testament emphasis lies not on His teaching, nor on the beauty of His character, but on His deeds. God's revelation in Christ is one of judgment and salvation through the cross and resurrection. It brought about a new covenant and a new people. The continuity of the action of God and the people for whom He acts constitutes

the unity of the Bible; the continuing power of redemption and the continuous existence of the people of God bear witness to the perpetuity of revelation in the Church, as generation after generation listens and responds. It is one unending process, looking not alone to the past but to the future, when the final revelation of God in Christ will occur at the *parousia* and His people shall make their perfect response in a perfect adoration.

For a minister to be clear about this is to take his biggest step towards clarifying his attitude to the Bible he preaches.

2. THE BIBLE AND CRITICISM.

If it is right and natural for us to investigate the origins of the documents of the Bible; to distinguish between life-setting and content; revelation and record; then Biblical criticism is unavoidable. The burners of the Revised Standard Version engage in it as truly as the Revisers whom they cheerfully consign to hell. They merely disagree in their respective conclusions. To assign the Pentateuch to Moses is as truly a critical affirmation as to assign it to a line of redactors, for the Pentateuch is anonymous. The sooner we recognise this state of affairs the better it will be for us all. Biblical criticism is inescapable.

Much unnecessary heartburning has been caused by failure to distinguish between criticism and theology, yet their aims are different and they function on different levels. To make a pronouncement as to the authorship of a book is a non-theological statement, though many speak as though the Faith stands or falls according as we can or cannot connect certain names to certain books of the Bible. That unreasoning attitude to critical problems is all too common, as though the Holy Ghost were totally unversatile, and helpless beyond the Twelve and a few more. Critical questions are matters of fact, to be investigated in a spirit of adventure not of fear. We need the guidance of the Spirit, not bludgeons to defend Him.

It is true that theology comes into play in regard to the question whether revelation is manifest equally in all parts of the Bible, and as to the standard of judgment to be employed. This, however, is less the task of criticism than of exegesis and theology. Here we should not overlook that sayings like Mark vii, 15, and Romans x, 4, involve far-reaching judgments on the part of our Lord and Paul in respect of the Law, the Holy of Holies of the Old Testament. Jesus was regarded as a heretic by the Pharisees for His utterance, and Paul was denied by many to be an apostle or even a Christian for his views. Yet it is an example of what Forsyth termed "Highest Criticism," the judgment of the Scriptures in the light of reconciling grace. "The final criticism" of the Bible, he affirmed, "is neither literary, nor scientific, but evangelical." This is an application of the Lutheran dictum, "What has to do with Christ is apostolic." Consciously or unconsciously the principle is carried out by every preacher who stresses those parts of the Bible which

make the Gospel plain. The systematising of this procedure is a task of Biblical theology; since it is so practical, it ought to be a matter for every minister's consideration.

The Lutheran dictum has bearing on some thorny questions of authorship. In Luther's view any teaching which fails to proclaim Christ is not apostolic, though Peter or Paul were its author, while whatever preaches Christ is apostolic, though its author were Judas or Annas or Pilate or Herod. This latter aspect is interesting. Who wrote 2 Peter? When the critical view was first advanced, that the letter is an expansion of Jude, it was indignantly asserted that if that be so, such an impersonation is nothing less than a work of the devil. Plummer commented that on such a hypothesis Satan has cast out Satan with a vengeance, for 2 Peter is in content also "apostolic"! A little patient investigation into the practice of pseudonymity, and an ability to grasp that the Holy Spirit could yet be behind a man who employed literary conventions of his age, would enable questions of this kind to be discussed on their right level. In any case, investigation of the Scriptures which by hook or by crook reaches predetermined conclusions is a denial of the Spirit of truth who is behind them and does no honour to our Lord or His Gospel. The minister who is afraid of truth contradicts alike his calling and credentials.

3. THE BIBLE AND EXEGESIS

The unrealistic use of the Bible often revealed in preaching indicates a lack of concern as to its real meaning. Allegorism is still rife, and the Bible is then made to yield precisely what is wanted from it. The only remedy for this is a rigorous study of the Bible with the aid of scientific commentaries. Every minister ought to have the aim of purchasing the best single commentary on each book of the Bible and of reading them all carefully over a period of years. That is not so unreasonable as may appear if the entire span of our ministerial life is taken into account. I doubt if any man will preach quite the same on the Gospel of John after reading Hoskyn's commentary as before; the same applies to Sanday and Headlam on Romans, Armitage Robinson on Ephesians, Charles on Revelation (however much one differs from him); while we all know what a new world has been opened up by the great works on the Old Testament prophets. These books were written for ministers; there is no excuse for bungling exegesis now that they are written.

Perhaps the outstanding problem of exegesis is how to relate the two Testaments to each other; to what extent are we at liberty to read the New into the Old, and how do we use the Old for the interpreting of the New? Traditionally the Church has followed the clue given in the New Testament and read the Old Testament in the light of its later fulfilment. This method has often led men astray, for the New Testament writers had a far better grasp of the Old Testament than was current in the later Church, and

they knew Christ better too.* Modern Old Testament Scholars have striven to extract from the Old Testament text the meaning that the original authors intended to convey. The discipline is necessary, but we may well ask: Should Christians be content with understanding the Old Testament as though Christ had not come and the New Testament had never been written? That is unthinkable. Now that we have had the fruits of painstaking labour on the Old Testament in its environment, we have the task of relating it to a Christological interpretation which will do justice to that labour and to the existence of the Church of Immanuel.

What of the New Testament itself? The New Testament cannot be understood in isolation. The W.C.C. conference on the Bible which met at Bossey, laid down the following plan for Bible study: Begin with the New Testament message of Christ, investigate the Old Testament from this perspective, then turn back to the New Testament in a sort of circular motion; by this method the whole Biblical message will be brought into play. It was admitted that to carry through this programme is one of the greatest tasks of present day theology. The wise minister will not wait for the theologians to finish their job but will see what he can do about it himself.†

4. THE BIBLE AND PREACHING.

The minister's habit of taking a text has the best of reasons: it implies that what he says is not so much his own view as the Word of God in Christ. Yet it can hardly be contested that the habit has often become conventional. Frequently the Bible is closed while the minister preaches, or the text is but a peg for a topical dissertation that stands in no genuine relation to it. There is a need for more Biblical preaching and a desire for it in our congregations. How is it to be done? We suggest:

(i) *Preach on the big texts.* A big text in its context gives one something to talk about, qualitatively and quantitatively! Cf. Matt. xvi, 18f.; 2 Cor. v, 21; 1 Tim. iii, 16; Rev. xxii, 17. In preaching on texts like these I do not believe in preparing the sermon first and consulting the commentaries afterwards; Spurgeon's secretary used to arrange for him around his room every commentary and reference work dealing with his text, and the great preacher would read them all before even considering his outline. The example is worth following.

* See Prof. Dodd's "According to the Scriptures." Note how modern typologists, in the name of the Epistle to the Hebrews, have related the entire tabernacle cultus to Christ, oblivious apparently that in Hebrews, Christ fulfils the priesthood foreshadowed by Melchizedek and by-passes the Aaronic.

† For an interesting example of what is involved, see Brunner's *Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, in which he turns to John i for the doctrine of Creation before he treats of Genesis i, and to the New Testament teaching on sin before he goes to Genesis iii. The method needs care in use but something like it seems demanded if we really believe that theology should be consistently *Christocentric*.

(ii) *Preach on big themes that demand Biblical treatment.* Consider the kind of series suggested by the British Council of Churches for the Bible Weeks, e.g., "God has spoken and is still speaking to the Individual"; "God has spoken and is still speaking to the Family"—"to the Neighbourhood"—"to the Nation"—"to the World"—"to the Churches." Themes like this give an opportunity to declare the will of God for life and to illustrate it from all parts of Scripture.

(iii) *Preach on extended sections of the Bible.* The parables of Jesus spring to mind, but there is also a multitude of them in the Old Testament. The Servant Songs of Isaiah, the Prayers of the Bible, the Sermon on the Mount, or even the favourite chapters of your people, could all be treated with profit in the pulpit.

(iv) *Venture to take a series of studies on an entire book of the Bible.* This can be done either in detail, in the case of shorter writings, or by taking broad surveys of larger works. In the case of the longer books of the Bible the latter method would seem to be necessary, yet how profitable it would be to give your people studies in Jeremiah, or Ezekiel, in Matthew or Acts! There is great advantage in such a procedure, for :

(a) It provides the minister with a plan of campaign for a considerable period and relieves him of anxiety as to subjects for preaching. It also gives the congregation the satisfaction of feeling that they are getting somewhere in their understanding of the Bible.

(b) It enables the preacher to avoid the inevitable temptation of concentrating unduly on matters that appeal to him.

(c) It provides opportunity for dealing with the whole gamut of human experience, its joys, trials, victories and failings. This last is of importance: a congregation cannot charge its minister with preaching at them if very pertinent passages occur in a book being studied!

(d) It gives the minister peculiar authority in his preaching, first because he is making himself the mouth-piece of the Word of God, secondly because he is dealing with that in which he is the best informed of men. In other subjects, he is liable to be caught out, for at best he is an amateur student in them; in this field he is, or should be, an expert and has been trained for this above all else.

In a day of calamitous ignorance of the Bible, and when it is urgently needed, the minister has an opportunity of speaking the Word with the authority of the Spirit. It will make greater demands upon him than more conventional methods, but if he does it reasonably well he will have grateful congregations. Whatever method he employs, let him not neglect to declare the Word which is able to make men wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.