

advocated by Kalthoff in his two works, *Das Christusproblem* and *Die Entstehung des Christentums*, to which the lecture is mainly a reply. But the same question concerns us in this country, and not a few will turn with eagerness to the little work before us to discover what is the historical

value attached to the Gospel narratives and the allusions in the Epistles by so acute a critic as Professor Bousset. We feel sure that the result will be largely reassuring, and that there will be only one opinion as to the high tone and the religious fervour of the author.

The Need of Prophets.¹

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THE passage from which the text is taken is a familiar one to readers of the Old Testament, and will need only a brief introduction.

This chapter describes the discontent of Israel at the difficulties and privations connected with the journey through the wilderness. So acute was it that even the manifest displeasure of Jehovah did not allay it. It broke out again, and this time the ground of complaint was their food. The people greedily specified the dainties of their fare in the land of bondage, and their cries, unmanly, unrestrained, reached Moses. The story of Numbers has often repeated itself. Human beings are not unseldom touched in the matter of eating and drinking. When these appetites are checked, or hampered in free enjoyment, they not only complain, but lose self-control both in little crises of family life and on wider occasions.

With every man a rebel confessed, both against Jehovah and against his appointed leader, the case was a desperate one. There are few passages in Scripture more tragic than the record of the bitter cry for help which Moses raised to Heaven: 'Wherefore layest Thou the burden of all this people upon me? I am not able to bear all this people alone. It is too heavy for me. Now let me die, and let me not see my wretchedness.' It may be that God answered his servant's prayer in a way which was unexpected. He bade Moses choose seventy tried men. To these He promised a special spiritual gift, such as was pre-eminent in

'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets.'—Num. xi. 29.

Moses, and thus they were to lift the weight of administration off the shoulders of the commander-in-chief. The sign of this gift was prophecy, it may be only once, and there and then exercised.² In any case, it was regarded as a signal token of the indwelling presence of Jehovah, a token also that they were men capable of helping Moses in the task before him.

The appointment of the Seventy was invested with every solemnity. They were directed to station themselves around the front of the Tabernacle. Then Jehovah's Presence was so immediately manifested that the elders accepted it as a convincing proof of the reality of their commission. Then the people in turn received the assurance which they also needed, for the Spirit descended upon the Seventy, and they prophesied.

And here something strange and unexpected occurred. For some unexplained reason two of the Seventy had failed to appear outside the Tabernacle, and had remained behind in the camp. But they were not to lack the gift that had come to their brethren. They too prophesied. This phenomenon caused much excitement. A boy brought the news to Moses; and Joshua, ever jealous for his chief's authority, entreated Moses to prohibit the two from this function. His request met only with reproof, a reproof which reminds us of our Lord's words on a like occasion.

Moses thrust aside any such claim as Joshua would have made for him, he rejoiced in this manifestation of the Spirit, and desired that all

¹ Being a sermon preached in Salisbury Cathedral, Trinity Sunday, 1904, on the occasion of the general ordination of the Bishop of the diocese.

² Nu 11²⁶ (R.V.).

might be partakers of this grace. 'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!'

You are too well instructed to suppose that the title prophet always means one who predicts future events. The title bears that meaning fully, absolutely in some passages. But commonly the predictive element lies in the background. But this in no way lessens the dignity of the office. For what was a prophet of the Old Testament? The prophet of course is assumed to have pure lips¹ and a heart right with God. More than this, he also stands as an intimate in God's secret councils.² He is in sympathy with God's purposes, and in turn interprets and declares them to his fellow-men.³ The ideal of the Old Testament is a dispensation in which all the Lord's people would be prophets. The far-reaching mind of Moses saw this. The line, moreover, taken by Moses was thoroughly characteristic of the hero. Our children know that he was called 'meek.'⁴ This might as truly be represented by the word 'disinterested.' All that is told of Moses indicates a withdrawal of himself,⁵ a preference of the cause of his nation to personal interests, which makes him the most complete example of Jewish patriotism. It is only the finer spirits amongst men that can speak and act as he did here. When you and I find ourselves face to face with others exhibiting talents and graces equal or superior to our own—especially when they are younger or occupying less assured positions than we do, when they are possible candidates for the places we fill, how difficult it is to be generous, and how rare a gracious kindly attitude! But not so Moses, 'the man of God.'—'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets.'

I have roughly and of course inadequately described the prophet of the Old Testament. We might describe the prophet of the New Testament in modern phrases—as a devout, earnest, spiritually minded layman—ready to devote himself to the Church, laying any gifts of intelligence or influence at His Master's feet, pleading with others, speaking to others in the cause of the Faith.⁶ Prophecy in the New Testament implies the consecration of the powers of speech, and surely of the pen also, to the most holy enterprise which man can undertake. The prophetic or preaching function is to-day a pre-eminent task of

the ministry. Woe to it if we elders, or you my younger brethren, ignore or belittle this sacred duty.⁷ I fear that there is some danger of its neglect.

But if the cause of our holy Faith is to be truly advanced, it cannot be too often said it must not be left only to the clergy. The laity must take their part, their just part as prophets. Only rarely did the New Testament prophets belong to the orders of the ministry; but for the most part they would be eminent Christian laymen, illuminated expounders and preachers of the Gospel. In no age of the Church is such active service more deeply needed than in our own, their gifts of intelligence, their power to communicate what they themselves have received of divine revelation. To render such services we all, ministers, laymen, and I would say women also,—for women possessed the prophetic gift in the Apostolic Age,⁸—need to throw off that hampering habit of reserve which clings about us in our religious lives, and to cry boldly: 'O come hither and hearken; and I will tell you what things he hath done for my soul.'⁹

That there is room for what I may now describe as prophetic effort on the part of Christian people is plainly apparent. Not only so, but there is every encouragement to make it. We are told from the pulpit with a melancholy insistence of the mass of indifference to holy things and causes which confronts Christians. It is unhappily true; but it is true mainly of circles that give themselves up wholly to the world. On the other hand, it is equally true that a spirit of inquiry about our Holy Faith is in the air. Men are seeking after God if haply they may find Him.¹⁰ Magazines like the *Expositor* and THE EXPOSITORY TIMES are read by numbers of persons who are not yet wholly obedient to the Cross. The very existence of such a publication as the *Hibbert Journal* points to the fact that the Christian Faith interests and attracts, if it does not win, the highest intellects in our midst.

I beg you Christian people, my brethren the clergy, men and women, rise to the occasion. Let man's necessity for religion to-day be your opportunity. The opportunities are certain to come. If the ministry is never of help to an anxious seeker after Truth, that ministry is so far a failure. If a

¹ Is 6.² Jer 23²².³ Jer 15¹⁹.⁴ Ex 2¹¹, 14 5⁴ 4¹³.⁵ Nu 12².⁶ I Co 14³¹.⁷ I Thes 5²⁰.⁸ Ac 21⁹.⁹ P 34¹¹.¹⁰ Ac 17²⁷.

layman is not ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason concerning the hope that is in him,¹ then his own profession of the faith must be weak and halting. The occasion will come.

But for such enterprises a due equipment is needed.

Perhaps the helper must have had his own doubts. We have no record of any value of the later life of St. Thomas, but surely of all in the apostolic college he would be the most helpful to hesitating souls, to seekers after God. At any rate, the helper who is merely a brusque, ill-informed controversialist is worse than useless. Sympathy is imperative. Not of course a sympathy which is prepared to surrender the Christian Faith piecemeal because some of its truths are unpalatable to modern taste. But a sympathy which holds out loving hands to the honest doubter, to those who are well-nigh shipwrecked concerning the faith.² Possibly we have something to learn from a striking movement in other quarters. The Christian Endeavour Society may have far-reaching consequences, as its adherents here and in the United States are increasing with an extraordinary rapidity. We should regard the movement in the temper of Moses. But what we need is not so much another society, as a new spirit of love and of enterprise for the Faith.

It is not needful to speak of spiritual qualifications, for without them any effort on our part for God is doomed to failure, yet an appeal may be made to one and all.

If you would help the doubtful and uncertain, if you would desire, as God gives you occasion, to show them the inherent reasonableness, as well as the beauty and power of the Christian Faith, you must be ever learning more and more about its

¹ 1 P 3¹⁵.

² Ti 1¹⁹.

truths yourselves. For this there is abundant opportunity. The younger clergy should to a man join the Central Society for Sacred Study. I earnestly beg that all who receive holy orders to-day will do so without delay. On you also and others, but especially those about to enter the teaching profession, I would urge the joining the Higher Religious Education Society. It does in this and other dioceses solid unobtrusive work. It teaches, we hope, something of the scientific temper in religion. It certainly helps thoughtful, earnest, religious people to help others.

And for those who cannot join such societies, there is open Christian literature. One of the happiest signs of the times is the publication of works within almost everybody's reach, valuable if slight, on Church History, Christian Evidences, the Book of Common Prayer, and, above all, on the Holy Scriptures. No Christian should declare himself as too busy to read such books. The more they are read the more profoundly interesting they become, and the more fit the readers prove to help forward the cause of the Great Teacher, the teacher of Nicodemus, of the woman of Samaria, and of His own apostle, St. Thomas.—'Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets!'

If only this aspiration were realized to-day! If we Christian people could get the better of our timidity and throw off our reserve, if we would grasp more and more our common cause, if we would seek more and more to know the deep things of God, if we would extend a sympathy, intelligent, and gracious to doubting minds, then, not only would the outlook of the Faith not be despondent, but we should eagerly expect triumphs all along the line, as, like enthusiastic athletes, we strove together for the faith of the gospel.³

³ Ph 1²⁷ συναθρουντες τῇ πίστει τοῦ εὐαγγελίου.

The Writings of the late Professor A. B. Davidson.

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THERE is reason to believe that a dated list of Professor Davidson's numerous articles and reviews, scattered in various publications, together with a complete list of his books, will be useful to readers of THE EXPOSITORY TIMES. The idea, as far as the articles are concerned, has come from

Dr. Driver, who remarks, in a note referring to them, that 'they are difficult to find, and they would be of interest as illustrating his movement in critical opinion.' Such a list is rendered the more necessary by the unfortunate circumstance, that in the posthumous volumes of Dr. Davidson's