

from the dead, even Jesus, which delivereth us from the wrath to come" (I Thess. 1: 10).

But if, through the resurrection power of Christ, believers will experience the glories of the coming Kingdom, it is equally sure that unbelievers will suffer the doom of sin. The same crisis which means salvation for the righteous means judgment for the wicked.

No doubt the fact of this ultimate judgment, with its terrible consequences for the ungodly, raises difficulties intellectual and moral in our minds. We are ready enough to assent to the suppression of evil in the abstract: we shrink from the implication of its suppression in the individual. Yet apart from personality sin has no existence. Sin is not something abstract. It is the activity of a living will, human or demonic, and is always identified with the person through whom it is expressed. Its reprobation, therefore, must inevitably affect that person. Problems connected therewith rise from our very limited view of things. God alone can have eternal views of such a subject. He, and He only, can measure the righteousness of His eternal judgments.

Eternal judgment is not annihilation, which denies the persistence of personality; neither is it remedial suffering, which underestimates the malignant strength of man's evil will (see Rev. 16: 10-11). Eternal judgment is God's vengeance upon sin. This is not vindictiveness, for the word translated "vengeance," as Greek scholars remind us, signifies literally "that which proceeds out of justice." This proceeding of justice involves, among other things, the compulsory subjection of evil to the will of God. There is no anarchy in the eternal prison-house. Hell, not less than heaven, shall acknowledge Christ as Lord, and bow to His rule (Phil. 2: 10-11). In judgment God gives His active decision upon the free actions of man and binds them within that decision. So that when man comes under judgment his initial freedom, which is freedom within the limits of creaturehood, is still further circumscribed and becomes freedom within the limits drawn by that act of judgment.

The death of Christ has brought men within the scope of such a judgment. It is within this limitation that man now exercises his freedom and choice. The will of God directs the course of moral and spiritual law, and determines their issues. God is the arbiter of human destiny.

"Walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Eccles. 11: 9).

Men are shut up to the acknowledgment of God's authority. Eventually all things will be subdued to God, whether things in

heaven, or things in earth, or things under the earth (Phil. 2: 10). The witness of Scripture expressly declares it, and in pledge thereof points to the session of Christ at the right hand of God.

"The Lord saith unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psa. 110: 1).

". . . Jesus Christ: who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (I Pet. 3: 22).

"For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet. . . . And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all" (I Cor. 15: 25-28).

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth" (Rev. 19: 6).

The full significance of the death of Christ as an instrument of judgment can only be measured by this vision of God, enthroned over all, blessed for ever.

A vision so elevated cannot but call forth an ascription of power and majesty to Him to whose ways these great judgments bear witness. How can this more fitly be rendered than in the language of Scripture itself?

"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou rulest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name" (I Chron. 29: 11-13).

V

THE UNITY OF OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

THE BROAD GENERAL NARRATIVE BUILT UP IN THE BOOKS OF the Old Testament—the Divine Saga, if you will—presupposes that one harmonious purpose lies behind and unites all the records, diverse though they be in origin and scattered in time. The impression received in reading them is that of one

who is now able to stand back from the canvas and survey the whole scene, for the size of the canvas is due to the breadth of the subject. Though details may still be difficult to assess, the broad sweep of the composition is revealed. Even as we read, and re-read, the records, circumstance after circumstance falls into place, and we begin to trace elements of design, which manifest themselves in broad continuity of purpose, steady progression toward a given end, and in a complete control of events.

The unity of Old Testament history, moreover, is a presupposition of New Testament thought and teaching. This is due in part, no doubt, to the consciousness in the Jewish mind of the historical destiny of their nation. The inherited conviction of being called by God to serve His purpose in the earth gave every Jew a strong sense of history. The local and temporary was ever taking on a universal significance for him: he was vividly aware both of past and future.

This feeling of historical continuity had been fostered from generation to generation. The great leaders of the nation, from Moses onward, had based their declaration of policy upon the facts of national history: and frequently presented these facts in panorama before the people, as their recorded speeches show. The Psalmody used in public worship, too, had, by the force of constant usage, confirmed this habit of mind. Not a few of the Psalms were outlines of the nation's history. Such impressions, moreover, were made when the religious mind was most open to receive them: and, being often repeated, became permanent.

A long tradition lives in, and influences, the mind of a people. And when that tradition receives powerful support from the facts of experience, it becomes unconsciously part of the very fibres of racial thought. Israel's mission in history was such a tradition. Was not God's mercy upon Israel unto all generations? The truth of this tradition had stood the test of time and experience. The great nations of antiquity, one after another, had built themselves up, and then crumbled into decay. Egypt, Nineveh, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece—the Jewish nation had seen them all rise to the zenith of their power and pass away into oblivion, but she lived on; and wonderful as her past had been, she looked forward, despite long-continued calamities, to a still more wonderful future. Not for her the cycle of natural historical evolution, but the grand outworking of an ordered plan with beginning and end: the beginning, a Divine call whose workings could be traced back to the foundation of the world; the end, a lofty consummation in which the purposes of the history would be fulfilled and preserved. Until that end was reached, the nation was indestructible. Little wonder that the Jew has a profound sense of the

unity of historical movements, and of his own in particular! The writers of the New Testament shared in this consciousness, and the unity of Old Testament history thus became a starting-point of their thought and teaching.

But an influence much more potent than tradition lies behind this acceptance of the Old Testament history as one. The writers of the New Testament manifest a sureness in interpreting the Old which can only mean that some new co-ordinating factor has come to their knowledge. Hitherto the sacred narrative had been a subject of enquiry and of diligent investigation: now it had suddenly become one of conclusive interpretation (I Pet. 1: 11-12). A position had been reached from which the Old could be elucidated and explained.

The interpretative point of Old Testament history is Christ. Until He appeared, the final bearing of much that had happened aforetime could be but dimly apprehended: but once events had fulfilled themselves in Him, the ancient history was illuminated by the facts of the Gospel. The knowledge of these facts gave the apostles fresh insight into the sacred writings, and from the number of Old Testament passages quoted by them in the Gospels and elsewhere we can see how their knowledge of Christ shed light on the dark sayings of Scripture. Their treatment of prophecy is, in principle, applicable also to history. For Christ is the interpretative point of the one as of the other.

Who, in Abraham's day, would have thought that the call of Rebecca to be the wife of Isaac had a Divine intention beyond that of the moment? Although Isaac had already been named as the vehicle of God's purpose in history, the far issue of that purpose was, at that time, one of the "things not seen as yet." But now that Christ has been manifested, the call of Rebecca is seen in its determinative value for the line through which the Saviour was to come. Somewhat after this fashion must the writers of the New Testament have come to interpret the Old. Christ was the great criterion by which they tested and discovered the relevance of Israel's history to God's world-plan. This method of interpreting the history of the Old Testament is without point or meaning unless that history be an organic and vital whole.

Also, it is upon this principle that we are to understand the passage in Hebrews which speaks of Moses as "accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt." Now Moses' choice was not influenced by any direct knowledge of Christ, but by his conviction that God's purpose in history was identified with the children of Israel, then suffering in Egypt. It was an act of faith. Doubtless he looked for a Divine Prophet

yet to come, but the manner and circumstances of His coming must have been beyond Moses' power to anticipate. Even in a later day, when the Lord Himself was present with them, the disciples could not recognize the central event of His coming (the cross) until it had actually taken place. How much less, then, Moses in his day? Nevertheless, the writer to the Hebrews, viewing things in a later time, when the full development of events had come, tells us that Moses' choice was one which in its final issues was set upon Christ. When Moses identified himself with Israel, and thereby chose to incur reproach, he was really associating himself with the whole Divine process consummated in Christ, the reproach of which was, in principle, the reproach of Christ. The use of the word "Christ," therefore, in such passages as Heb. 9: 26 and I Pet. 1: 11 is to be accounted for by the fact that He is the interpretative point of Old Testament history. Such passages teach us that it is in Israel's relation to Christ that the nation has significance within the purpose of God. Sever Old Testament history from Christ, and though it may still have currency as religious experience, it has lost its primary value.

The Gospels contain two genealogies. These show how the influence of inherited tradition, and that of illuminative fulfilment, moulded each in its own way the currents of apostolic thought. Although bearing common witness to Christ, and concurring in the Messianic lineage, they are written from quite different viewpoints. That in Matthew carries forward the authority of a duly authenticated Divine tradition and traces it to its end in Christ. That in Luke recognizes the authority of a dynamic event in history, and traces it back to its origin in God.

The Matthaean is the sequel to the genealogies of the Old Testament, and accords with their spirit, being based upon accepted records from the past. It differs from them only in that it records the final issue of the series. Abraham and David are conspicuous therein as the acknowledged ancestors of the Messianic line, and it is by His descent from them that the claim of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ is here established. This way of looking at Old Testament history presupposes dynastic unity.

In the Lucan genealogy, on the other hand, everything is dominated by the Fact of Christ Himself, who forms the grand point of departure. The interest is created in and from Him. In this, the genealogy accords with the spirit of the New Testament, which, though interpretative of the past, is energized by the dynamic power of a present event. The way in which the line is worked back to the act of God in creation suggests that Luke

saw in Christ the divine purpose which accounts for and justifies the creation of man, and the real cause which gives individuals such as Enoch and Noah, Abraham and David, their place in the scheme of Hebrew history.

It is in retrospect from Christ that the common genealogies reveal their primary spiritual value. When being written, the exact course and issue of the Divine purpose could not have been foreseen. True, here and there, a particular branch was singled out for special notice, and, as time passed, a main interest developed, but in general no one could say certainly from which line the Messiah would come. The documents were a plain straightforward transcription of genealogical data: it was only afterwards that God's action therein began to be seen. Thus the genealogy of Christ was not isolated as such from the common genealogical tables, but was embedded in the general register of names. This accounts for the seeming irrelevance of a large mass of names in these genealogies, and proves beyond question that the Messianic element is there, not through human foresight, but through a dispensation of Divine providence. This hidden development in the long succession of Hebrew generations is that from which Old Testament history derives its substance and completeness.

We now have knowledge, through the Gospel, of Him in whom are co-ordinated the wide scope and complex relations of Old Testament history. Surface diversity now yields to an underlying unity. Not that there had not been in former times indications of system and order. For even as events were taking place there could be traced signs of a balanced and harmonious scheme. From the beginning there had been unbroken continuity of purpose and a progressive development of working, which demonstrated that things were being carried forward and fulfilled within the circumstances of a predetermined plan. But the full scope of the movement was not apparent until Christ came. Even now its manifold connexions elude our grasp in part, but we have what believers in Old Testament times had not, the key to the perfection of Scripture, namely, the knowledge of Christ manifested. While the vastness of this Divine plan is beyond the power of human minds to comprehend, flashes of its reality break in upon our consciousness and make us aware of a divine unity holding all things together in the Person of Christ.

But the Old Testament narrative is something more than a self-contained scheme within history. Though primarily concerned with the Messianic development, it ultimately extends into a world-view of things (a *Weltanschauung*), covering all time.

The activity of God in Israel always took a universal standpoint. Even of the temple service it was written, "My house shall be called an house of prayer for all peoples" (Isa. 56: 7). If it be asked therefore what contribution the Messianic stream had made to the main tide of history, the only possible reply is that, in a very real sense, it *is* the main tide of history: all others are tributary.

The Messianic purpose holds together the entire fabric of history, integrating all things in Christ. Through their contacts with Israel, the great nations of antiquity—Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, and in more ancient times, Nineveh and Egypt—fall into the general framework of Old Testament prophecy. Do not Daniel's visions symbolize human history as one vast organism, united in character and destiny? The face of contemporary history may seem to wear another likeness and to have no vital relation with Biblical times. We have moved into another age. The assumption, however, is superficial, for it overlooks the solidarity of mankind, and the consequent moral unity of history. The book of *Revelation*, in depicting the final phases of world-history, employs the prophetic imagery of the book of Daniel, and teaches the spiritual identity of times future with times past. Indeed, the last great phase of Gentile world-dominion is there described as combining in one the characteristics of the four wild beasts of Daniel's vision; thus indicating that the moral features of these successive world-empires would be reproduced in this, the climax of the whole.

History is the active expression of spiritual forces. These, with the passage of time, may flow through new channels, but the time-stream remains the same. Forms of civilization change: the spirit of man is one throughout. The entrance of sin has resulted in outward disintegration: but God's action in history has brought everything into relation with itself, and therefore into one spiritual framework. The reaction of man to contemporary workings of Divine revelation brings out racial as well as individual dispositions, and thus decisions made in narrow temporal circumstances have a universal and eternal significance. Athithophel's betrayal of David was of a piece with the sin of Judas Iscariot (*cf.* Psa. 41: 9 with Acts 1: 16). The rulers of Israel who rejected Christ were, with the persecutors of the prophets, a single brood of vipers (Matt. 23: 29-35). Enoch's prophecy has an application to the Second Coming as well as to its immediate context: the ungodliness of the last days is one with that of antediluvian times (Jude 14: 15). The sum total of this world's guilt will be found in Babylon the Great (Rev. 18: 24). And as, from the death of Abel onward, a measure was being

filled that ultimately in the death of Christ completed Israel's guilt, even so now the guilt of the whole race, in its continued persecution of God's people, is filling up the cup of wrath against the judgment-supper of the great God (Matt. 22: 35; I Thess. 2: 14-16; Rev. 19: 17).

God's purpose in Christ is the invisible thread around which the dissolving elements of history are being crystallized. This Divine movement has been active from the beginning of time, and will continue so until the end. Its central point is the death and resurrection of Christ. From this Divine Event is thrown out a spiritual energy that fills the field of history and forms the basis of judgment for all the generations of time.

"I am the First, and I the Last:
Time centres all in Me."

In whatever age a man may have lived there has been in it a manifestation of the Messianic movement appropriate to the time. The letters B.C. and A.D. are not only convenient chronological symbols, but they enshrine a profound spiritual truth. Even in our day, remote from Christ, we live our lives *Anno Domini*. The Messianic movement, which is God's action in history, has come down to us, and is now associated with the testimony of the Gospel as maintained by Christian churches or witnessed to by individual believers. We can, if we will, publicly and decisively identify ourselves with Christ, and so become rightly related to God. This involves a personal acknowledgment of sinnership, and a serious repentance toward God through faith in Christ crucified and risen again.

A scheme of history so bold and comprehensive in design, so sustained and punctual in execution, is calculated to meet our inborn desire for an "explanation" of this vast world of affairs into which we find ourselves thrust. Meditation upon the meaning of human experience, and upon the enigmas of life, burdens us with a tragic sense of destiny, reaching beyond the narrow bounds of earthly existence: and though we feel ourselves but insignificant units swallowed up in the flood of the centuries, we crave for some assurance that there is an ultimate plan behind the general course of things. Where, except in Holy Scripture, do we find a philosophy of history, which, while rendering intelligible the phenomena of life and binding together in one piece the fragments of man's long chronicle, is also a gospel for the individual soul? The historical process enshrined in the Old Testament is a structural unity in itself, but it is also the ground of a wider unity connecting all things, for weal or woe, with the purpose of God in Christ. Belief in this unifying principle behind the broken aspects of outward history gives purpose to

life, and fortifies men against philosophies that make life meaningless and moral effort futile. It awakes the conscience, and bids us see to it that we, as individuals, take the right decision in regard to these final and eternal issues. For the response made to this Divine revelation concerning God's Son determines the personal destiny of those to whom that revelation has come.