

HISTORY, PROPHECY AND GOD

By
ROBERT RENDALL



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DEDICATED
TO THE REVERED MEMORY OF
EDMUND HAMER BROADBENT
AND
DOROTHY BROADBENT
WHOSE FRIENDSHIP AND COUNSEL INSPIRED
AND WHOSE ENCOURAGEMENT SUPPORTED
THE WRITING OF THIS BOOK

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“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.” Psalm 19: 14.

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FOREWORD

THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK IS A MAN OF MANY PARTS. He has already made a name for himself as poet, naturalist, archaeologist and critic; here he shows himself a careful surveyor and illuminating guide in the fields of Biblical theology and the philosophy of history.

A good book does not need a commendatory foreword, and a bad book does not deserve one. This is the kind of book that does not need one, but I am glad to write one for it, as I have followed its development with keen and sympathetic interest for the past seven years.

I first realized that Mr. Rendall was interested in this subject when I read a paper of his on "Old Testament History: Its Nature and Unity," which appeared in *The Evangelical Quarterly* for October, 1946. This paper excited widespread interest, and made it clear to competent judges that here was a man who had thought long and deeply on the character of the Biblical revelation and had something worthwhile to say about it. It therefore seemed a plain duty to encourage him to pursue this line of study, although he himself has had modest misgivings about his work, and has confessed that, but for this encouragement, he would not have persevered with it to the end. His readers will be glad that he allowed himself to be encouraged to finish it.

The subject of the book is one that has been treated in recent years by such well known scholars as Christopher R. North (*The Old Testament Interpretation of History*) and Oscar Cullmann (*Christ and Time*). Mr. Rendall has gone his own independent way, which in various features differs from the academic way. He pays little attention, for example, to questions of historical and literary criticism. But his theme is one which is but little affected by such questions as these. His study affords strong confirmation of the Christian interpretation of world history, which sees the solution to its problems in Christ, manifested "at the consummation of the ages." It brings out the essential part played in the Biblical revelation by history and prophecy, both alike fulfilled in Christ. It points to the Cross as the decisive place of world-judgment, in which "all human history has been accomplished and sealed up." It proclaims the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to be the Lord of history, primeval Creator and final Judge, who directs and overrules the universal process "in accordance with the loving design which He planned from the first to carry out in Christ—the establishment of a

New Order when the times were ripe for it, when He would make everything, both in heaven and on earth, centre in the Christ." And it confronts us with the personal challenge presented to each one of us by this unveiling of God's eternal purpose.

I hope that *History, Prophecy and God* will find many readers, and that it will help them to understand more clearly the unity and meaning of the Biblical revelation, and to respond wholeheartedly to its challenge.

F. F. BRUCE

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS BOOK SEEKS TO SHOW THAT THE JOINT-WITNESS OF Biblical history and prophecy to Christ points to a Divine purpose within and behind the flow of human affairs, and that this purpose gives spiritual significance to life. It is therefore in some sort a theological interpretation of history.

The Bible speaks to us as men: using everyday language, it refers to people under familiar vocational titles, like Zenas the lawyer, Luke the physician, Erastus the city chamberlain, Alexander the coppersmith, and Herod the tetrarch. All men alike share in the ultimate issues of life, so that it need not be wondered at if on occasion others than professional theologians should seek an explanation of the why and wherefore of the sum of things in human history. For the same reason the common man may also be willing to consider a fresh approach to a question in which all of us are so intimately and personally involved: and even those who have pondered the problem more deeply may find something here to confirm faith or remove doubt, or even, it may be, to give second thoughts upon a matter already considered settled in quite a different direction.

In pursuing my reflections I cannot hope to have escaped the perils of human fallibility. Readers will doubtless find conclusions with which they cannot concur, and supporting arguments which to them may appear inconclusive. I seek their indulgence, for despite such inevitable differences of opinion on details it remains my firm conviction that the central thesis of the book conforms to the general tenor of Holy Scripture.

For the most part Scripture quotations (all in R.V.) are given in full, as are original sources in any serious study. So that if the commentary be not convincing to any they may the more readily consider the language of the Word of God, which in its native force is unmatched for producing firm convictions in the mind.

In the early stages of the book I owed much to the counsel and encouragement of the late Mr. E. H. Broadbent, author of *The Pilgrim Church*, and to Mrs. Broadbent, particularly the latter, who read the MS. of *Section I* most carefully and gave me some valuable criticism. I also wish to express my deep indebtedness to my friend, Mr. F. F. Bruce, M.A., Senior Lecturer in Biblical History and Literature in Sheffield University, for having read the complete MS., and for much critical advice on points of textual interpretation. The points of view expressed are my own.

Extracts from the book have already appeared in article form in *The Evangelical Quarterly*, and certain paragraphs have been used in *The Witness*, but this is the first presentation of the material as a whole.

That the book may, under the blessing of Almighty God, contribute something to strengthen the Christian tradition, and to supply fresh confidence in the validity of Christian experience, is my earnest prayer; above all, that it may evoke praise to Him from whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things: to Him be glory for ever. AMEN.

Kirkwall, Orkney.

R. R.

INTRODUCTION

HAS HISTORY BEHIND IT A PREDETERMINED PLAN? OR, ON the contrary, is it conditioned by chance? This question is of profound practical value. Archaeology has opened up our horizons and demonstrated with conspicuous realism the continuity of civilization. By way of cultures now dead and buried the living present is linked with the remote past. Is there, then, within and above this extraordinary natural development, now covering a period of several millennia, a single directive Will, governing the course of human affairs? If so, it follows that upon our knowledge of this ultimate basis of history hangs a secure and contented attitude to life.

In the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is disclosed a prophetic scheme on the grand scale which gives purpose and meaning to history. Originating in ages now far distant, and developed over an extended period of time, this disclosure is consummated in the recorded facts of the death and resurrection of Christ, and in the apostolic doctrines implicit within these facts. The Bible, so viewed, is a prophetic interpretation of the world's history, "declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done" (Isa. 46: 10). The form in which this revelation has come to us is twofold: that of history, establishing a vital contact with human experience; and that of prophecy, securing as real a contact with the sovereign mind of God.

The history is of actual events, narrated by competent scribes, and supported by contemporary evidence. It records, first of all, broad racial origins and the dynastic developments rising out of these; then, in carefully documented chronicles it follows up certain movements within what, for its purpose, is the main stream of human progress; and finally, in the New Testament, it registers a series of events, which, while local in their occurrence, are universal in their significance, and from which the course of all future history is oriented. It has, therefore, organic completeness, is developed as a continuous whole, and exhibits perfect consistency in all its parts. The various histories fit into a single framework, each particular biography, genealogy, state-document, or private memorial, being a fraction within a larger unit, and having a context greater than its immediate setting.

Independent of this narration of historical fact, but intimately connected with it, is a comprehensive scheme of Divine prophecy, rising from simple but pregnant beginnings into a complex but

ordered system, which, like that of the history, displays a remarkable unity of design. This prophetic scheme carries within itself guarantees of its Divine origin. Many of its disclosures are strictly predictive, and therefore beyond the range of human forecast. The accuracy of these has been verified minutely in subsequent history. Again, the later prophecies are so related to the earlier as to have cumulative, or even ascensive, force, thereby expanding, as well as confirming, the earlier oracles. Can this homogeneity of distant and diverse prophecies be purely fortuitous? Or does it indicate the out-working of some tremendous and far-reaching purpose?

These two schemes, moreover, one drawn from actual life upon earth, and the other from the secrets of the Divine counsel, have an unmistakable correspondence with each other, which argues a common source. In the Scriptures they are co-ordinated upon a vast and impressive scale, and within a closely interwoven texture of events. This necessarily brings together the objective realities to which each bears witness, and points to some fundamental and absolute relationship between the supernatural activity of God and the outward development of human affairs. Nor is this relationship merely an academic agreement between prophetic ideologies on the one hand, and the concrete realities of history on the other: for it is based on the common denominator of personality. Prophecy and history alike fulfil themselves through living persons: prophecy and history alike express their values in terms of personality. Truth is here found in its final and absolute category.

This clears the way for the recognition of the fact that in the Person of Christ both history and prophecy have their complete fulfilment, and also their perfect co-ordination. The Divine purpose, disclosed in prophecy, and wrought out in history, is held together, throughout all its parts, in a living Person. All its movements converge upon one solitary commanding Figure. "He is before all things, and in him all things consist" (Col. 1: 17).

If history and prophecy alike move within the realm of personal relationships, and take final values from relativity to Christ, it follows that the rightness of our view of the sum of things, as well as our individual salvation, depends upon our settled attitude to Christ. "What think ye of Christ?" thus becomes a profound and fundamental, as well as a simple and practical, test of a person's spiritual whereabouts.

It is recognized that the position here affirmed rests chiefly, if not solely, upon the authority of Holy Scripture. This does not necessarily invalidate its truth for our present discussion, which

is based upon the self-authenticating nature of the Bible testimony. All that is required at the moment is to show—it is hoped without distortion and with all fairness—what this testimony actually sets out to say.

If it can be shown that the writings of Scripture so combine as to form one Divine whole; and if, by the ordered arrangements of the parts, each Scripture is seen to serve, not only the immediate circumstances in which it was written, but also an inspired master-scheme, to the purposes of which both it and the other Scriptures are subordinated; further, if within this scheme we have real contacts, through prophecy, with disclosures of the Divine will, undiscoverable by reason; and also, through history, with actual events upon earth; we may well believe that in the Bible, if anywhere, is revealed the hidden purpose, predetermined of God, which is being worked out under the surface of human affairs.

This gives us two guiding points. First, the internal structure of the Bible enables us to test the integrity and trustworthiness of the Book, and thus to confirm on objective grounds the reality of those inward satisfactions that spring from spiritual experience. That is to say, the Bible contains within itself the means of verifying its statements of fact and its judgments of value: and so is self-authenticating. It also follows that the method of synthesis will, in the end, yield more fruitful results than the analytical, especially if the latter leads to an undue emphasis of "differences" or obscures the essential harmony of the whole. This is not to deny, however, that the sober dissection of things that differ—the distinction, for instance, between modes of spiritual administration in different eras, reflected in the portions of Scripture relative thereto—will contribute to an exacter knowledge of the general anatomy of the Book, and of the true relations and particular functions of its various parts. It is rather to reaffirm that Scripture is one, and that any such differences are dispensational, not absolute and final.

In all it must not be forgotten that the secrets of divine revelation are not demonstrable through the wisdom of man, and that they are apprehended by the hands of faith and prayer and by the inner vision of a pure heart, rather than by the acuteness of natural intelligence. Nevertheless, we are not denied the keen gratification which springs from an intelligent and rational appreciation of the purposes of God as these are disclosed to us in the Scriptures of truth. Not without meditation, not without coherence in our meditations, shall we be able worthily to make our own that noble outburst of worship raised by St. Paul when he reflected on the inscrutable ways of the God of heaven.

“O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past tracing out!

“For who hath known the mind of the LORD? or who hath been his counsellor?

“Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

“For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen.”

(Romans 11: 33-36.)

PART I

HISTORY

I

THE NATURE OF BIBLE HISTORY

BIBLE HISTORY IS THE RECORD OF A CHAIN OF CIRCUMSTANCES binding God's original purpose in man with the advent of Christ. This gives inward significance to the historical books of the Old Testament. These histories are something more than a cross-section of human experience, such as one may find in any other history book: they are the record of a unique Divine process, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the full expression. Outwardly, indeed, they move within the orbit of general history, but inwardly they concentrate upon a particular history, a Divinely-conditioned series of "things determined beforehand to be done." The materials of the common history of Scripture are actual events, which in themselves are perfectly normal and common to human experience, but are afterwards seen to have had a Divinely-guided issue, a predisposition to a definite end. This predisposition is found in God's original purpose in man: this definite end is found in the advent of Christ.

The form of these histories shows strict fidelity to historical truth. The objectivity of the writers, the unforced references to known geographical sites and to actual chronological periods, and, in addition, the natural way in which the facts are set down, go far to create a presupposition in favour of the traditional Christian belief that these books record events which have actually taken place. Furthermore, the events of the common history of Scripture, as distinct from what is supernatural, accord so perfectly with human experience and with civil history as to give the immediate impression of being a straightforward narration of facts, based upon the personal knowledge of the writers or upon reliable sources of information. They are, upon the surface at any rate, true to life, and, as far as one can judge, true also to fact.

The naturalistic approach to the writings of the Old Testament, however, has led to other conclusions. It has been assumed that the methods employed by the ancients in compiling their chronicles were such that historical accuracy is not now to be expected in their works. A substratum of historical fact certainly underlies the general narrative, but large sections of the material, it is

said, are conditioned, wholly or in part, by the individual outlook of the authors, or by the vital necessities of the periods in which they wrote. Nor is this all. Accretions are held to have gathered, in the course of time, around the original narratives, and the religious consciousness of later transcribers, living in quite different circumstances, to have contributed materially to the final form of the documents. In order that these subjective elements may be distinguished from those of objective fact and a reconstruction of the actual history made possible, the methods of modern historical criticism are called into use. Thereby, we are told, an irreducible core of reliable tradition has been laid bare; and we are assured that, whatever may have been destroyed in the process, no injury has resulted to the spiritual authority of the writings. Indeed, on the contrary, it is affirmed that the critical process has elucidated their true spiritual values, and relieved these of the need of any strict dependence upon historical accuracy.

The normal Christian reaction to this has been one of deep-grounded suspicion, and that for two reasons. The first is that, by a sound spiritual instinct, the Christian man senses in it an underlying negation of the Divine authority of the Scriptures, and consequently a danger to the heart of his spiritual life; the second, that, through discoveries in other fields of human knowledge, the findings of the critics upon the historicity or otherwise of certain Scriptures have repeatedly been proved untrustworthy: consequently, an attitude of reserve has been induced toward speculative critical reasonings.

The first may, not unjustly, be put down to prejudice, but the real question to be asked is, "Is it good prejudice, or bad?" That is, "Is it founded upon reliable concepts?" Prejudice is not necessarily unreasonable. In everyday life we prejudge many questions in the light of ascertained fact. This, of course, is prejudice, but it is good prejudice, because founded upon knowledge. If the average Christian were asked to put into words the reason of his objection to any theory which belittles the historicity of Scripture, he would in all probability give as answer his faith in their Divine origin. Now it can scarcely be denied that the more destructive critical methods presuppose an almost wholly naturalistic origin for the documents. The Christian man feels this, although, for lack of intellectual training, he may not always be able to refute the critical arguments. In brief, he has an inward assurance of the validity of his own position, and being persuaded of this, he rejects all speculative reasonings which, in his judgment, contradict it. This is not to say that the critical position cannot be assailed and refuted, on

logical grounds, within its own field; but that a refutation of this kind, while valuable from a speculative standpoint, seems quite unnecessary from a practical. So that while, on the one hand, no true man would wish to stifle free enquiry after truth, on the other, it is our duty to safeguard ourselves against vexatious and wasteful speculations that may be disposed of out of hand by reference to established facts. Many of the problems, therefore, raised by modern historical criticism are simplified for the believer by a return to first principles.

Two leading questions may be proposed. First, is the dogma of the Divine inspiration of Scripture grounded in reality? And, secondly, is the naturalistic approach to the Old Testament histories at variance with that of faith in their Divine origin?

The proof that the Scriptures have the Holy Spirit of God as their effective Author comes from within Scripture itself rather than from external sources. The Christian has heard or read the Book for himself, and, from that contact, has come to acknowledge, as a personal conviction, its Divine origin. As fire kindles wood, so is he kindled by the flame of truth. He is born again by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. This miracle, of which there is abundant evidence in Christian experience, is mere illusion if life in the Word is not a reality. Is it surprising that those in whose lives it has taken place should regard with scrupulous confidence the instrument through which it has been effected? But, more objectively, on detached intellectual grounds, the Scriptures exhibit a coherence and self-consistency of such amazing breadth that a mere human origin for them, even on a broad cultural basis, is quite incredible. As this is to be the main line of discussion in subsequent chapters, it need not be elaborated here.

The second question proposed is, for the present argument, crucial. Is the naturalistic approach to the Old Testament histories at variance with that of faith in their Divine origin? Does the acceptance of the one view inevitably exclude the other? Is it possible to form a synthesis? Many professed Christians here find themselves upon the horns of a dilemma. They feel—upon grounds, it is said, of intellectual honesty—that they cannot refuse assent to the critical findings, yet they are equally sure, they earnestly aver, that God's voice is audible in this Book: so they conclude that some sort of compromise must be possible. The results are neither happy nor convincing. The dilemma is not avoided by minimizing the verbal accuracy of Scripture in order to avoid conflict with critical preconceptions. Fresh difficulties arise. For one thing, we must then face the fact that the writers of the New Testament viewed as inspired the writings

of the Old. More embarrassing still, we must explain our Lord's acceptance of their integrity. Clearly, we must get behind the problem before an answer can be given.

All are agreed that the Old Testament is a vehicle of spiritual truth for mankind. These truths are mediated through stories of one kind or another. "What matters it," says the critic, "whether the truth is mythological in form or whether it is historical? Either is only the external mode of presentation. The truth itself is neither invalidated nor certificated by the literary dress in which it has come down to us. That literary fashion is determined by the age in which it was written, and is only relative and temporal: the truth which it clothes is eternal." Superficially, this appears irrefutable. Do not the very Scriptures themselves affirm that the Old Testament narratives were written with ethical and religious purposes in view? For after enumerating some of the incidents in Israel's journey through the wilderness, Paul, in his epistle, goes on to say, "Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition" (I Cor. 10: 11). This seems to favour the view that even historical incidents were primarily written in order to convey spiritual teaching, and the critics draw the conclusion that this value can exist equally well in mythological as in historical narratives. While this does not absolutely rule out historicity, it leaves an open door for religious mythology. This concept of the nature of Bible history puts the Bible into the same category with the sacred books of other world-religions, even if upon a higher level within that category. If mythological truth or spiritual teaching is the final value of the Bible, the Christian may well on this issue capitulate to the critics; but if, on the other hand, we accept the truth that the Bible not only shows us a way of life, but that its supreme object is to reveal a Divine purpose in history, then the question of its historicity becomes acutely vital.

Myths may mediate moral truths: they do not document circumstances of fact. And the Event of Christ in history is linked up with certain antecedent circumstances of fact. We cannot dismiss these without dismissing Christ. If these are without historical truth, Christ, as the sum and substance of them, has no real meaning. The chain is broken. For it is not merely a question of abstract religious truths handed down through successive generations, but of a personal action of God within history: an action initiated from the beginning of the world, carried on in unbroken sequence throughout Old Testament times, and consummated at the end of the ages by the appearance of Jesus Christ. It is not even a question of Old

Testament incidents *prefiguring* events in the life of Christ, true also as that may be, but that the very incidents themselves are historical links in a chain of circumstances binding, as already said, the original purpose of God in man with the advent of Christ. This fact is postulated by the genealogies both of the Old and New Testaments, which are careful to link the promised Deliverer with the first man, Adam. Faith in Christ, then, is more than the acceptance of His teachings: it is the acceptance of Himself as He is presented to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments—the Son of God come down from heaven, the Messiah promised through a particular human ancestry, Who, in the circumstances of His death and resurrection, has fulfilled the prophetic Scriptures. Faith is rooted in fact.

Now the Fact of Christ includes the reality, not only of His own death and resurrection, but also of the whole preparatory series of events and situations comprehended in Old Testament history. The whole great development stands or falls together. That events are recorded which appear to have no connexion with the Messianic history does not affect the argument. The Divine process referred to is embedded in the common history of Scripture, and if the latter is discredited, the former is scarcely likely to be trustworthy, and the whole process falls to pieces. If faith in Christ is not securely grounded on matters of fact, then, as Paul points out in his argument upon the resurrection, our faith is futile. These things being so, we see how impossible it is to effect a compromise between the findings of destructive criticism and faith in the Divine origin of the Scriptures. The two are mutually incompatible. To the one, the Old Testament histories mediate religious truths, and nothing more: to the other, they document the circumstances of a Divine intervention in human history. We conclude, therefore, that the prejudice of the Christian is not without reason, and that his spiritual intuitions, when the facts out of which they arise are examined, are shown to be justified.

The second reason for doubting the reliability of critical pronouncements upon Bible history is not exclusively Christian, but a matter of common experience. For if, in the light of duly ascertained facts in other fields of human knowledge, such pronouncements have repeatedly turned out to be misleading, a cautious attitude toward fresh critical theories is not so much an index of faith as of practical good sense. Are we, then, faced with such a situation? In reply it may be said that competent and informed writers of worldwide scholarly repute have challenged the soundness of many conclusions which throw doubt upon the authenticity of certain Old Testament narratives: and have shown

by irrefragable proofs that those incidents have a firm foundation in fact, and that, in many instances, the verbal account of them in the Old Testament shows a scrupulous and sometimes surprisingly vivid accuracy.

Archaeology in Biblical lands has made important contributions to our knowledge of ancient history, and in consequence of new facts laid bare by the spade of the excavator, readjustments have had to be made in many departments of human thought. On no branch of study, however, has scientific archaeology had such devastating effects as upon destructive criticism of the Bible. Indeed, so numerous have been the striking confirmations of Old Testament history, and of Scripture passages disputed on so-called critical grounds, that a whole literature has sprung up round the subject. Volumes have been written jubilantly pointing out, in direct contradiction of the critical points of view, indubitable confirmations of Bible history brought to light through archaeological research. Again, conversely, volumes have been written by erudite theologians contending that, while the archaeological facts themselves are indisputable, their logical bearing has been misunderstood by over-earnest apologists; and that the facts point in quite a different direction. Nevertheless, after all enthusiastic overstatements have been sifted out, and due weight given to all modifying criticisms, there remains a substantial mass of evidence, sufficient to convince any unbiased reader, that the modern critic's key positions have, in many instances, been rendered untenable; and that, after all, the traditional Christian view of the Old Testament holds the field.

It is common knowledge that implements recovered from ancient sites, and associated with definite historical periods, have accorded in a most remarkable manner with chance notices of such articles in the Bible, within precisely the same periods. Take for example the discovery, on the site of Lachish, and in a context of temple use, of a three-pronged fork. This supplies an "illustration" of I Samuel 2: 13, where it is said that "the priest's servant came with a flesh-hook of three teeth in his hand." While this does not supply actual "proof" or "confirmation" that the wickedness of Eli's sons is a historical incident, it does afford proof that the record in I Samuel is in keeping with the period, and that there is nothing to show why it might not have taken place. Similarly, the discovery on the site of Gerar of Philistinian cornpits and of primitive flint sickles "illustrates" the narrative of Genesis 26: 12. It does not prove that a man of the name of Isaac, at that particular place, sowed corn and reaped a bountiful harvest, thus incurring the envy of established rivals; but it does show that there is no apparent

reason for believing that the incident so recorded may be something other than an objective statement of fact. Thus, while these and similar "illustrations" are not to be taken as technical "proofs" for the historicity of particular incidents, they should nevertheless caution men against the fallacy of assuming that these ancient narratives are not good history. In the nature of things it is not to be expected that archaeology can supply strict logical confirmation for every separate incident. But it can, and does, dispose of objections raised against the possible genuineness of narratives bearing such authentic marks of the period in which they are set. Moreover, since the archaeological discoveries cannot have been made in collusion with the writers of the histories, it is only fair to assume that the correspondences referred to rise out of circumstances of historical fact: that is to say, certain things happened in a certain way; in this way, therefore, they are reported of by the historians; in this way, also, they are found by present-day archaeologists to have occurred.

Due weight has here been given to the technical distinction between an "illustration" and a "proof" or "confirmation." This is all the more necessary since it has been advanced that in the appeal to archaeology Christian apologists have failed to observe this distinction. The question may therefore be asked, whether, in addition to the numerous side-notes supplied by recent discovery, there are also genuine "proofs" for the existence of disputed historical personages, and for the authenticity of disputed historical incidents. The once prevalent denial of Belshazzar as a true historical figure, and the subsequent discovery of inscriptions which put his historicity beyond doubt, is but one instance among many which could be put forward in reply to our question.

From times still more primitive may be produced confirmations that serve to refute critical doubts on Genesis, and which would certainly strengthen Christian faith were that not already established upon more secure grounds. It was once believed that the presence in the book of Genesis of certain clearly perceptible Babylonian traditions must have been derived from Jewish contacts with Babylonian thought during the period of the captivity. It is now established on archaeological grounds, what hitherto ought to have been perceived on Scriptural ones, that the Hebrew race, through Abraham, had an earlier contact with Babylonian culture, and that the knowledge of this must have been transmitted to Moses. The work of Sir Leonard Woolley at Ur of the Chaldees (Abraham's old city) has revealed the existence of a highly developed civilization, which flourished long before the days of Abraham; a civilization, moreover, in

which literature was a commonplace, and in which the arts and crafts were advanced to a surprisingly high degree. Certain literary peculiarities in Genesis are quite well accounted for within the context of this early Babylonian culture. Moreover, it has been pointed out that the language of the later chapters in Genesis has an Egyptian colouring superimposed upon it, suggesting that the author of Genesis, besides inheriting this early Babylonian tradition, also had an intimate acquaintance with Egyptian modes of speech. Moses, in social and spiritual descent from Abraham, and trained in the court of Pharaoh, exactly fills the picture.

These points of discussion might be continued indefinitely without arriving at a conclusive result. For all along the dispute has been something more than a difference of opinion on minor interpretations, but has risen out of radical and strongly-opposed differences of judgment on the fundamental nature of Bible history. It is not that critical investigations have been characterized by constant changes of opinion, or by lapses of judgment—in all human studies mistakes are inevitable, and scientific method allows for correction, through experiment, of a working hypothesis. Nor is it that traditional orthodoxy has always been able or willing to abandon mistaken interpretations of Scripture, or that it has never advanced unsound arguments in support of its convictions—good causes sometimes have indifferent advocates. Nor, again, is the quarrel with Higher Criticism as such: for, in the same way as much valuable information has been made available for students by the work of textual criticism, so also may much valuable information be gained from knowledge of the conditions under which a particular book came to be written. To join issue on such points is merely to beg the main question, which has to do with the Divine inerrancy, or otherwise, of the Scriptures, and their consequent historical reliability or unreliability. For the Christian this will be determined by the Fact of Christ.

Accepting, therefore, without reserve, the historical accuracy of our materials, we may now turn to the variously documented narrative and see if it is held together by a single comprehensive plan, and so forms in truth one book. As Old Testament history would be presented less laboriously, and certainly more significantly, under an expansion of distinguishing “notes,” than as a bare recital of events, a chapter might well be devoted to each of three such signatures of unity, namely, the note of Continuity, that of Progression, and that of Crisis, all of which presuppose a central superintending purpose. By applying these as tests, we shall find that the Old Testament contains internal

proofs of its unitary character, and that its several histories are but integral parts of a single *Heilsgeschichte*. This in turn will be seen to form an impressive piece of evidence for the moral unity of all history, and the consequent significance of our individual lives. The Christian revelation gives meaning to human existence, and the long history of the race, in outward seeming sorely broken, becomes integrated within a divine purpose of cosmic dimensions.

If this interpretation of the Old Testament histories is indeed central, we should be able to discover in our studies the bearing of varied incidents and to perceive vital relations between events far removed in time and place. This would go far to support what has here been put forward as the true interior significance of these histories. The whole subject is of the highest practical importance toward a working philosophy of life. If founded on truth, the knowledge of this Divine activity within history confers on those who possess it an understanding of the true relation in which man stands to the world around him, and to God the Creator of all. It is therefore our duty to examine these writings, and to test whether they contain those features of ordered purpose and of spiritual process already referred to.

II

THE NOTE OF CONTINUITY IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

ABRAHAM IS A FIXED POINT IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY. From him proceeds in unbroken continuity the whole history of the chosen race until the coming of Christ: toward him flows the main stream of earlier history from the beginning of the world. He stands in the centre of the economy. His experiences of God become the spiritual heritage of the nation. The Abrahamic covenant, in particular, provides the norm of Israel's future development. Out of that dynamic circumstance is released the historical activity which finds its ultimate goal in the advent of the promised Seed, which is Christ. The fact of the covenant, as a determining influence upon subsequent history and upon Israel's religious faith, calls for more than a passing glance. Meantime, it may be said that behind the historical proceedings recorded in the pages of the Old Testament may be traced one continuous policy, which has its dynamic centre in the Abrahamic covenant.

Abraham provides also a definite point of intersection with

other movements recorded in the Old Testament which also go back to earlier beginnings, and which look forward to the time of the end. The evil spiritual culture identified in Scripture with Babylon, which first showed itself in apostasy from the knowledge of the One God, Creator and Sustainer of all things, by the building of the city and tower of Babel (the end of which is shown apocalyptically in the book of *Revelation*), had its local manifestation in Abraham's days in Ur of the Chaldees. The political and cultural aspects of that phase of Babylonian life are now disclosed to us by the spade of the excavator, but the Bible is concerned rather with the spiritual significance of that great movement in the human race, a movement which had its origin in pre-Abrahamic days, and which extends beyond these into a remote future; but with which Abraham had significant personal connexions.

The prologue to the Abrahamic covenant was made when the Lord first called Abram (as he then was named) out from Ur of the Chaldees. This severance from the idolatrous polity of Babylonia was the necessary condition to the establishment of the covenant. Apart from this condition, the promises given by God were unconditional. They included a national future in another land, a sphere of influence which should extend over the whole earth, and the assurance that God Himself would maintain the cause of Abraham's race. The precise terms are:

"Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee;

"And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing:

"And I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12: 1-3).

Upon Abraham's obedience God confirmed the gift of the land, saying, "Unto thy seed will I give this land" (Gen. 12: 7). And again, "All the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever" (Gen. 13: 15). And again, "I am the Lord that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it" (Gen. 15: 7). By a covenant sacrifice this deed of gift was formally ratified, and the extent of it expressly defined: "Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. 15: 18).

When Abraham was ninety-nine years old, the Lord again appeared to him, and confirmed the covenant as being irrevocable, adding, however, certain provisions to define the lawful succession. At this point careful emphasis is laid upon the true line of inheritance. A reservation is made, the peculiar blessings attached to the covenant being secured to Isaac and to his heirs

for all time coming. The sustained obedience of Abraham under trial led to a still further ratification of the covenant on God's part and a promise made of worldwide and beneficent rule. "Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22: 17-18). In due time Isaac is born, the heir to the promises. To him, on Abraham's death, the covenant is renewed.

"I will establish the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father;

"And I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these lands; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 26: 3-4).

After him, the question of special succession is still a matter for God's decision: Jacob is elected in preference to his older brother, Esau. To Jacob also a personal renewal of the covenant is given by God:

"I am the LORD, the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

"And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, . . . and in thee and in thy seed shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 28: 13-14).

After this the question is dropped—at least as far as inclusion among the covenant people is concerned. The twelve patriarchs all share in the Covenant, and any distinctions made thereafter are economical, and have to do with special offices within the nation.

The foregoing observations indicate how particular a matter God held this principle of continuity to be. By assuming the formal style and title, "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob," He lays emphasis not only upon the initiation of the covenant under Abraham, but upon its continuance under Isaac and Jacob. Abraham is named, as distinguished from all others throughout the whole earth; but Isaac in a specific manner, in order to mark him, as God's choice, from his half-brother, Ishmael; and Jacob, likewise, to distinguish him from his twin-brother, Esau. Only those who are in direct succession to the heads of the twelve tribes, or who by law have been incorporated into the nation, may share in the privileges of the covenant. This safeguarding of the covenant-privileges for Abraham's true posterity is a meaningless act unless some special importance is attached to the historical continuity of Israel as a nation; unless, indeed, some purpose of God is to be wrought out in this particular field of history.

The active influence of the covenant upon the direction of

Israel's future history was recognized in all the great periods of Jewish nationalism. The Exodus from Egypt is, according to the testimony of Moses, the sequel to the Abrahamic covenant. According to the "testimony" of Moses—for Moses bears witness to this on grounds of objective experience; it is not simply a judgment-value arising out of religious preconceptions. God had actually appeared to him, and that under His covenant Name of "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" (Ex. 3: 6). This title is used and repeated with punctilious regularity in the proceedings which led up to the Exodus. The initial movement toward the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt is recorded thus:

"And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Ex. 2: 24-25).

So when Moses received his commission at the burning bush, the Lord transacted with him as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and used language which was a direct paraphrase of the terms of the covenant: and Moses was instructed to adhere to the same language in his report to the elders of Israel. Later still, when the issue with Pharaoh was finally joined, God strengthened Moses with the assurance,

"I am Jehovah:

"And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah I was not known to them.

"And I have also established my covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land of their sojournings, wherein they sojourned. . . .

"And I will bring you in unto the land, concerning which I lifted up my hand to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob: and I will give it you for an heritage: I am JEHOVAH" (Ex. 6: 2-8).

The whole set of circumstances, therefore, surrounding the Exodus from Egypt is intimately connected with, and rises out of, the earlier circumstances surrounding the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.

The remembrance of this forms the principal theme of Psalm 105, in which we read,

"O ye seed of Abraham his servant . . . He is the Lord our God . . .

"He hath remembered his covenant for ever . . .

"The covenant which he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac; and confirmed the same unto Jacob . . .

"Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan."

The subsequent history of the chosen nation is then celebrated as the direct outcome of this covenant, and after recounting the deliverance from Egypt and the experiences of Israel in the wilderness, the psalmist concludes with this observation,

"For he remembered his holy word, and Abraham his servant."

The sanctity of the covenant is as remarkable in its preventative as in its operative effects. When Israel sinned in the matter of the golden calf, God withdrew His presence from them; but stood by the pledge which He had made to the patriarchs (Ex. 33: 1-3). When Hazael king of Syria was used to chastise Israel, the Lord would not actually destroy them "because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" (II Kings 13: 23). The Captivity also, and the return from Babylon, were controlled by the remembrance of "My covenant with Jacob; and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham," as was foreseen even in Moses' day and referred to in the book of the law (Lev. 26: vv. 42, 44, 45).

The covenant not only determined actual history but also the inner religious faith of the people. The public speeches of Moses, recorded in the book of Deuteronomy, testify to this, as also do his prayers and intercessions. The spiritual experience of the patriarchs themselves was profoundly affected by the covenant promises, which became to them their very life and existence, and without which their faith would have been mere hallucination. This preoccupation with the covenant did not wane in the national consciousness with the passage of time and change of circumstances, but remained a living force, as witness the invocations of Elijah, of Jehoshaphat, of Nehemiah, and the public utterances of such men as king David and the prophet Isaiah. Passing over, however, the numerous occasions when the covenant name of God was invoked as the sanction for what was taking place, we come to the supreme event in Israel's history—the advent of the Messiah.

As with the Exodus, so here in the Incarnation we have a set of circumstances intimately connected with the earlier circumstances surrounding the Abrahamic covenant. But now, in a unique sense, events have gathered themselves up into a single circumstance, which holds together and comprehends all that has gone before. That circumstance is a living Person, our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the promises made to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, come into effect, and in a way that no previous fulfilment had covered.

The words of the *Benedictus* and the *Magnificat* draw strength from the consciousness that God had brought to pass what had

been pledged aforetime to Abraham. Mary, in her lofty song of praise, rises above her own wonderful experience, and declares,

“He hath holpen Israel his servant, that he might remember mercy.

“(As he spake unto our fathers) Toward Abraham and his seed for ever” (Luke 1: 54-55).

Zacharias also, the father of John the Baptist, prophesies under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and says,

“Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel; for he hath visited and wrought redemption for his people,

“And hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David; . . .

“To show mercy towards our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;

“The oath which he sware unto our father Abraham” (Luke 1: 68-74).

A Divine action in history was about to take place, the far beginnings of which were to be traced back to a particular transaction, itself a Divine action in history, in the days of Abraham. The birth of Jesus Christ, the first-born son of Mary, would be in very fact God's remembrance of His holy covenant. For it was within the category of human personality that the covenant was to operate. “In thy seed shall all nations be blessed.” From Abraham onwards the heirs of the promise had anticipated a personal incarnation of all that the covenant stood for. The language of John 9: 56, however interpreted, can mean nothing less than that Abraham's faith was concentrated upon Christ, and that in Him Abraham saw the objective of all his hopes. The same expectation on the part of Mary and Zacharias shows how fixed in the minds of true Israelites had remained this principle of historical continuity, especially in relation to the Messianic hope. Because in the *Benedictus* not only is the Abrahamic covenant referred to as the root in history of the Incarnation, but the house of David as the appointed stem through which it derived. “And (He) hath raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David” (Luke 1: 69).

Until now, the performance of the mercy promised by oath to Abraham had been an indefinite far-off event; but now it was near at hand. The special value of Mary's witness, and that of Zacharias, is that the identity of the Messiah was now known. For it had been revealed to them that the first-born son of Mary, miraculously conceived of the Holy Spirit, was indeed the long-awaited Seed of Abraham. The highway of God's purpose from Abraham had reached its destination.

The public speeches of Peter, reported by St. Luke in the Acts of the Apostles, disclose how this conviction dominated apostolic thinking, and gave character to apostolic preaching. The resurrection of Christ—the vital fact commanding the situation—is attributed by Peter to the God of the Abrahamic covenant, for he declares,

“The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Servant Jesus” (Acts 3: 13).

And in making his appeal before the Jews, he bases it upon the covenant relationship of Israel to God, and upon the priority of right which that relationship confers, saying,

“Ye are the sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.

“Unto you first God, having raised up his Servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities” (Acts 3: 25-26).

This teaching was opposed by the religious leaders in Jerusalem, who saw in it a reproach upon themselves. Nevertheless, Peter and his associates adhered to this position, and when confronted with the charge of disobedience to constituted authority, replied,

“We must obey God rather than men.

“The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree” (Acts 5: 29-30).

The conflict was concentrated around this central point. For on the part of the Christians the invariable mode of defence, and of attack, was an appeal to Jewish national history—and to the action of God within that history—as the sanction for faith in Christ. Stephen's apology is indicative of general Christian feeling on the matter. Commencing with the call of Abraham to covenant relationship with God, he traces the historical development of the Divine purpose within that covenant up to Christ, and exposes with inescapable logic the significance of the crucifixion as the climax of the movement. His martyr-testimony, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God,” confirms the fact of God's mastery of the situation in its final issues, and illustrates with dramatic directness the crucial importance of the resurrection.

Paul's method, too, at least before Jewish audiences, is to root the fact of Christ in the soil of Jewish history, and to lay stress upon the continuous activity of God in that field. In his synagogue sermon at Antioch in Pisidia he makes God the active subject of his statements, the history of Israel the predicate, and the Messianic hope the object of that predicate.

"Ye that fear God, hearken . . .

"The God of this people Israel chose our fathers . . .

"He raised up David . . .

"God according to promise brought unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus . . .

"God raised him (Jesus) from the dead . . .

"The promise made unto the fathers . . . God hath fulfilled the same unto our children" (Acts 13: 16-41). Such was the substance and method of apostolic preaching.

Upon this foundation also rests the structure of New Testament doctrine. Again and again, expressly or by implication, this truth is made the basis of some particular teaching, or the sanction for some practical measure. A few typical passages may be quoted by way of proof.

"Christ hath been made a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, that he might confirm the promises given unto the fathers" (Rom. 15: 8).

"For how many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea: wherefore also through him is the Amen" (II Cor. 1: 20. Cf. Ps. 72: 17 with Gen. 22: 18).

"And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed" (Gal. 3: 8).

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law . . . that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 13-14).

"If ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3: 29).

Sufficient evidence from Scripture has been brought forward to establish the reality of a Divine process in history from Abraham to Christ. We have yet to trace a like continuity of purpose and action from Adam to Abraham, and thus to cover the entire period of Old Testament history from Adam to Christ.

The early chapters of the book of Genesis deal with two divergent streams of human descent from Adam: one, the dynasty of Cain; the other, the dynasty of Seth. The former exhibits material progress in the crafts and arts, but is characterized by moral deterioration and spiritual apostasy. The latter, however, preserves contacts with God's original purpose in creation, and becomes the repository of continued revelations. The inner quality of both generations soon manifests itself. Seth is represented by such men as the righteous-minded Enoch, submissive and trustful Lamech, and by obedient Noah, the

builder of the ark; to all of whom God found it possible to entrust fresh communications of His will. Cain, too, had fit successors in individuals like the violent and revengeful Lamech, the son of Methusael; indeed, so prevalent did his race become that the earth is said to have been filled with violence through them. The character of both races is submitted to the test of a universal deluge, a sifting at once by God of evildoers, and the vindication of the righteous: only the line of Seth survived. Noah and his household came out into a new earth. It is as if the racial stream, after parting into two, had reached a narrow defile in the mountains, through which only one had been able to find exit, the other having plunged underground and out of sight. Thus in Noah is preserved a strict and distinct continuity from the old world into the new, and a true descent, moral and genealogical, from Adam to the immediate ancestry of the patriarch Abraham.

Noah had three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth. By these the earth was populated after the Flood. The genealogies of Genesis chapter 10 give us the racial origins and the early geographical distribution of the nations of the ancient world. Three great racial groups are distinguished therein—the Semitic, the Hamitic, and the Aryan. Noah's prophetic curse and blessing (Gen. 19: 25-27) predicts the future of each; and Shem is singled out for a unique destiny, having spiritual primacy over the other two, and being the vehicle for the fulfilment of God's action in history. The direct line springing from Shem is given in fuller detail than that from Ham or from Japheth, and forms the connecting link between Noah and Abraham.

Has future history vindicated this designation of the line of Shem as the sphere of action for God's world-plan? A host of instances leap to mind, giving a strong affirmative. Through the Semitic race has been transmitted the knowledge of the one true God, Creator and Redeemer. Through the offspring of Shem has been given the Divine Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. From Shem has sprung that favoured people, the Jewish nation, whose supernatural history proclaims their Divine call. From Shem, too, is derived the human ancestry of Him who was born at Bethlehem, the Saviour of the world. In relation to the dominant branch of the Semitic race, moreover, is determined the boundaries and destinies of the nations of the earth (Deut. 32: 8), and even in our day the indestructible Jew is a notable factor in world politics.

The genealogies of Genesis, chapter 10, also contain notices of two events of outstanding importance for the future of mankind: the rise of the kingdom of Babylon; and the scattering of the

peoples (vv. 8-11, 25). Chapter 11 is an important appendix to these notices, interpreting them as a spiritual crisis between God and the race.

The rise of Babylon marks the beginning of a new and powerful influence in human history. The organizing power of Satan creates the beginning of a world system through which he, as its unseen ruler, gains ascendancy over the affairs of man, and diverts to himself the worship and allegiance rightfully due to God. Until now evil had shown itself largely as independent action in individuals; from henceforth it was to be organized as a mass movement. The personality of Nimrod provided the necessary leadership. Of him we read that "he began to be a mighty one in the earth"; that "he was a mighty hunter before the Lord"; that "the beginning of his kingdom was Babel"; and that "out of that land he went forth into Assyria" (Gen. 10: 8-11; *cf.* Micah 5: 6). Paraphrased in modern language, "he strengthened himself to acquire world dominion; to this end he pursued the chase as a preparation for war; he then organized his resources under a central government; and thus ultimately, through violent conquest, extended the territories under his rule." A familiar pattern of things even in our day! Babylon may therefore be designated a spiritual empire of evil, manifesting itself in great world-systems, religious, political and commercial. The historical manifestations may each have its rise and fall (*e.g.* the Dynasty of Nimrod, and that of Nebuchadnezzar), but the dominating force behind them is one. No political kingdom of Babylon may now exist, but the prophetic writings assure us that in the last days the power of Babylon will again develop, and mankind be organized into a final revolt against the authority of heaven.

With the rise of Babylon may be associated the other notable event referred to in Genesis 10, namely, the division of the earth among the nations. This is said to have taken place in the days of Peleg (Gen. 10: 25), four generations removed from Shem, and apparently only one after Nimrod's rise to power. How rapid, it seems, the deterioration! And how short the time since the stern admonition of the Flood! For this division is almost certainly the Divine action described in the subsequent chapter (Gen. 11: 8), and so the immediate fruit of the building of the Tower of Babel. If this be so, it expresses the consequences of a spiritual crisis in the history of man. This crisis revealed the religious foundation upon which the political structure of Babylon was built. The four corner-stones of that foundation were (1) INDEPENDENCE, expressed in human self-sufficiency and freedom from Divine law, a characteristic not absent from our own times.

"Let us make us a name." (2) CONFEDERATION, symbolized by the City and the Tower. Control is thus established, and leads the way to (3) DICTATORSHIP, expressed in the absolute supremacy of one man, as, for instance, Nimrod, Nebuchadnezzar, or the Roman Caesars, and illustrated also in the Papal pretensions of the Roman Church. This, in turn, leads to (4) INTOLERANCE, expressed in military conquest and religious persecution, and in the claim of absolute obedience to the state in things spiritual as in things natural (Dan. 3: 6; Rev. 13: 15-18), so that the blood of all that have been martyred for the truth shall be found in Babylon (Rev. 18: 24).

God, Who discerns ultimate aims (Gen. 11: 7), frustrated man's purpose and disorganized the movement. The dispersion after Babel made further concerted action impossible at that time: in this way internal confusion has broken up all world confederacies. God thus restrains the pride of man until such time as the kingdom of darkness shall have fully manifested itself, and become ripe for judgment (*cf.* Gen. 15: 16; Rev. 14: 15).

This division of the earth was also intimately bound up with the predetermined position of Israel among the nations (Deut. 32: 8). So that this early history of the rise of Babylon has special meaning for Israel. The call of Abraham, the father of the nation, from an important Babylonian civil community emphasizes the inter-action between Babylon as representing the kingdom of darkness and Israel as representing that of God. The rescue of Lot also, Abraham's nephew, from the Babylonian confederacy (Gen. 14: 1), may indicate the spiritual conflict between the people of God and "the rulers of the darkness of this age." The later contacts of Israel with Babylon, particularly that of the seventy years' captivity, still further illustrate how closely set over against each other are the two movements. Israel, as God's nation, had been during her golden age separate from the surrounding nations, though a witness to them. Now, because of her unfaithfulness to God, she became, and still remains despite partial restoration, a captive in the Gentile world-systems. As already indicated, the final phase of Babylon, in the last days, will have peculiar relations to the testimony of Israel among the nations of the earth (Rev. 18: 4).

Here, then, in the book of Genesis we have God's finger laid upon events which were to have an ever-increasing and continuous significance for the future history of mankind, events which had their immediate focus in the person of Abraham and in that covenant made with him by God. Thus Old Testament history, when reviewed in all its parts, has running throughout it a distinct line of continuity; a line of continuity, moreover,

which from beginning to end is dominated by one undeviating Divine purpose, of which the Abrahamic covenant is the operative expression, and the advent of Christ the ultimate objective.

III

THE NOTE OF PROGRESSION IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY IS PROGRESSIVE TO CHRIST. EACH successive stage brings forth some divine activity, unparalleled in previous experience, and so requiring new vehicles of praise. When, therefore, we hear the recurrent burst of song from Israel's minstrels, "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvellous things," we know that it heralds some unique and amazing and hitherto unheard-of happening. The former things are forgotten; a new thing springs forth: who but must declare it? The events celebrated are new, not simply in the sense of having newly occurred—which might mean nothing more than bare repetition—but new in the sense of each being without precedent, new in itself, original. Not of the circumstances of Sinai alone, but of all other milestones in the national history could the words be spoken:

"Ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?" (Deut. 4: 32).

For throughout the entire history creative activity breaks in upon the course of events, and situations arise which to human experience are bewilderingly new and different.

Though original and unique, these "mighty acts of the Lord" are not unrelated to each other, the later being fresh developments of the earlier. As it is written, "Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. Sing unto the Lord a new song" (Isa. 42: 9-10). These "wonderful works of the Lord" are, each and all, part of one preconceived plan, the details of which are hidden from man, but known to God. Acts 15: 18 speaks of "the Lord who maketh these things known from the beginning of the world." There is thus no contradiction between the originality of each new event and the continuity of the whole series, and scope is provided for orderly development and

planned progression. New situations are linked with previous history, but form an advance upon it. In each fresh crisis are disclosed both fulfilment and creative energy.

Over against the Biblical interpretation of history may be set the basic conception of pagan nature-mythologies, namely, the idea of endlessly-recurring cycles of events without any point of departure or arrival, and therefore in their movement without dynamic progression. With such heathen philosophies the revelation of God's action in history has nothing in common. The prophets faced with unflinching opposition all naturalistic world-views, such as those expressed by the cult of Tammuz denounced by the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 8: 15-16), represented in later times by such pagan figures as the Scandinavian Baldur. These mythical heroes and goddesses symbolized processes of nature, and in particular the natural cycles of the seasons. Transferred as a thought-form to collective human experience they also express mythologically the rise and decline of successive generations as the ultimate norm of human history. So expressed, history moves onward by a sort of natural necessity in an endless chain of perpetually-repeated events, having no fixed point of beginning, and leading up to no conclusive ending. Human life upon earth becomes a vicious circle from which there is no escape, and man, created in the image of God for the enjoyment of eternity, settles down to a futile natural existence, seeking the fulfilment of life in the ordered changes of the little turn of the wheel in which he finds his earthly existence moving. All deeper hopes of a more satisfying environment for his true being become doomed to perpetual frustration.

In the book of Ecclesiastes we have a reasoned exposition of this naturalistic philosophy, worked out to its logical conclusion. Not that Ecclesiastes is a divinely-authenticated world-view of things! Rather is it a formal presentation of a fallacious creed of life considered on its own principles. The viewpoint under discussion is not endorsed but described. But because justice is done to it, and its supporting facts presented soberly and accurately, we may be assured that the uncompromising attitude of Christian faith to all rival philosophies does not spring from ignorance or prejudice.

The Preacher, assuming the position of natural scepticism, asks in open challenge, "Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new?" "No," he continues, "there is no new thing under the sun. Consider the movement of human history. One generation passes away, another takes its place; nevertheless, the face of things on the earth remains very much the same. The sum total of life now is not very different from what it was in

former days, is it? True, the figures may have altered a little, but do they not add up and give practically the same result? Take, again, the world of nature. This is bound by a law of constant change, but is it not a change which simply takes things back to where they were before? The great circuits of the sun, the wind, and the rivers, these illustrate what I mean. Their movements are no real progressive development, only a fixed round in a beaten track. Or if the appeal is made to human experience, see how the even succession of events rouses in man only a dreary sense of futility and frustration. What profit hath a man of all his labour? What, indeed, but the oppressive drudgery of the treadmill? History—what is it but human situations, endlessly repeated, in inevitable cycles of time? Individual life—what is it but the slow fulfilment, already expressed in a thousand other lives, of an inevitable natural process? Everything moves on a deal level: nothing is leading anywhere: as things have been, they remain. I ask, therefore, what profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun? Nor does the outward world around offer him any hope. Everything seen and heard strikes eye and ear with an impression of incompleteness. There is no break in the monotonous regularity, no ultimate objective. The eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear with hearing. Things travel, indeed, but arrive nowhere. Thus by the inexorable logic of facts we are forced to the conclusion that nothing is, in a real sense, worth while: everything is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The Preacher, however, is not content with abstract speculation, but puts his theories to the proof by certain experiments in living. For this discussion is no dilettante intellectualism, but a passionate search after the reality of things. In modern parlance, it is existential thinking. The naturalistic position must be tested in actual practice. Would it yield a vital solution of the riddle of life? The results were disappointing. Experience only confirmed philosophic reflection, and although his ultimate pessimism is modified by the recognition of the homely pleasures of everyday life and by the perception of the excellence of wisdom over folly, yet in the end of his book, as in the beginning, he sadly confesses, *Vanity of vanities; all is vanity* (Eccles. 12: 8).

The decision, however, is not wholly unqualified: another and disturbing factor is present to his mind. View life as a natural process, and the conclusion is undoubtedly final: but the Preacher is inwardly aware that life is bound up with realities which lie beyond those of nature, that natural realities are not the final conditions of human existence. Moral consciousness

of God is as real to him as perception of the phenomena of nature. Men have their being in moral responsibility to God as Creator, and will for every action be accountable to God as Judge. Creation and Judgment—these are the two points, then, between which history completes its movement.

"Remember also thy Creator in the days of thy youth . . .

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil" (Eccles. 12: 1, 13 f.).

In other words, man is more than part of the great process of Nature: he is a personal being, directly related to God, and exists in a world above that of nature. Although it is true that man has relations with the natural universe, being formed of the dust of the ground (Gen. 2: 7), yet the fundamental fact in the constitution of man's being is that God created man in His own image (Gen. 1: 27), and that God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and that man became a living soul (Gen. 2: 7). It is in God that "we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17: 28). This relationship it is that gives us our consciousness of the supernatural.

Our true nature, then, is one of personal being, not one of natural existence merely; so that for us life has a moral quality and moves in a higher dimension than that of the beasts of the field. We are capable of personal decisions: we possess a free will, and are conscious of personal responsibility: we live in the isolation of self-consciousness into which no other save our Creator can enter. Within these unplumbed depths of personal being move spiritual energies which liberate themselves in incalculable ways. Is not this the very stuff out of which history is made? Is not this that which makes possible, nay, inevitable, the emergence of historical situations completely new and unprecedented?

This spiritual consciousness of true personality and selfhood is conditioned absolutely by the existential relationship established between God and man in the act of creation. This fact makes certain a future act of judgment, final in character, when the supremacy of the Creator over the whole field of history will be made manifest. Of these morally-related facts of Divine creation and Divine judgment the Preacher is profoundly conscious, and though in his treatise he does not work out their implications, yet he does recognize that in them are determined the final values of human existence upon the earth, and therefore of all history. With this he reaches the conclusion of the whole

matter. The works of man are not vain and empty; on the contrary, they are full of potentialities for good or evil; and every one of them shall be brought into judgment. Everything, therefore, is of tremendous significance: nothing is vanity.

History, viewed thus, is the product of active personality, with infinite possibilities of creative action. The Old Testament Scriptures emphasize the free activity, both of God and man, in the sphere of time. That of God is not limited by the automatic reign of natural law. During the long interval between His mighty acts of Creation and Judgment, God does not remain passive. Were this so, God's presence in history would be purely pervasive. His laws indeed would operate, but He Himself would be, save at the beginning and end, inactive. So far from this being the case, the personal intervention of God breaks ever and anon into the field of human history, taking the form of transcendental energy, redemptive in purpose, yet fulfilling itself on the plane of natural circumstance. Therefore, even when it has the form of common history, it transcends nature in its final issues, as is evident when the far objective is reached. The call of Rebecca to be the wife of Isaac, the adoption by Ruth of Bethlehem as her home town, the rise to kingship of David the shepherd lad, in their connexions with the still undeveloped Messianic purpose, illustrate the point. God thus for a time hid His wonders under the normal circumstances of everyday life until later developments disclosed the fact, hitherto unsuspected, of a personal Divine action. God also revealed His presence through events which were miraculous in form as well as in destiny. When it is considered that such events proceeded from One who in His Being is above and outside Nature could it well have been otherwise? Should not the exercise of supernatural powers be expected from Him who in His Godhood is essentially supernatural?

The Old Testament Scriptures likewise recognize man's freedom from the fatalism of natural law, and base this freedom upon the true nature of man's being. Powers inherent in personality, even if circumscribed in their field of action because of creaturely limitations, are of necessity free. Accordingly, man's history is here presented to us as something more than the inevitable out-working of fixed laws; rather is it the free operation of spiritual responsibilities. It is therefore full of surprises. This it is which makes history progressive, either for good or evil.

But while man is under no compulsion in his personal course of life, we must keep in mind that God reserves to Himself the right of judgment and sovereignly controls the final issues. The end of all things abides in His power. Man's liberty of

choice and God's sovereignty in judgment are complementary truths.

If it be asked what actual illustrations the Old Testament provides of such historical progression, reply is not difficult. The great Flood in Noah's day introduced a new dispensation in God's dealings with man. Hitherto, nothing like it had ever happened; from henceforth, also, nothing like it would again occur. Original to human experience, it was, until actually taking place, deemed impossible—as also will be the fiery destruction of the great day of the Lord (II Pet. 3: 4-10). Without precedent in the past, and not to be repeated in the future, it stands out as a unique event in Old Testament history. In token of this a covenant was made by God promising that never again should a similar flood of waters destroy the earth. Moreover, the fresh laws then made to regulate man's future upon the earth (Gen. 8: 21 f.; 9: 9-17) show that history had been switched on to a new level, and that another and different world had dawned.

The rapid development of the post-diluvian world—with its organization of the world into political systems and God's counter-movement in the call of Abraham—reached a new crisis in the Exodus of Israel from Egypt. Once again singular events began to take place, culminating in the extraordinary experiences of the Passover night and of the passage of the Red Sea. A nation was born in a day. And such was the impact of this rush of events upon the people of Israel that for them it dated the beginning of a new period of time.

“This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you” (Ex. 12: 2).

The past was superseded, and in the significance taken on by the present, the future opened out as a completely new dispensation. O.T. history had again moved forward.

The chapters in Isaiah's prophecy which speak of the return from the Babylonian captivity (40-49) disclose the unparalleled circumstances under which that deliverance was to take place. God's redemption of His people was to be an occasion of triumphant originality, and the prospect awakes all the enthusiasm and jubilation which such circumstances always call forth.

“Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and will glorify himself in Israel” (Isa. 44: 23).

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah, with the historical portion of that of Daniel, show that this was indeed the course that events took. The overthrow of Babylon produced a world crisis, and

thereby, in the restoration of the Jews to Jerusalem, was accomplished in history the overruling purpose of God. The depth of the impression made upon those who passed through the crisis of those days is reflected in the Psalms of the Restoration.

“When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them unto that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the nations, The Lord hath done great things for them. The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad” (Psa. 126: 1-3).

Jew and heathen alike recognized that God had broken in upon history. The times had changed, and that not by the natural evolution of historical processes, but by a direct intervention of Divine providence. That is to say, there was a prophetic fore-view of a future end toward which earlier beginnings had already moved, and toward which present events had bent the direction of history. This dispensational change had been foretold by Daniel in his prophecy of the seventy weeks, which were to run their course “from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem” (Dan. 9: 25). The writing on the wall was now history. God’s purpose in Israel had again risen above the dead level of natural causes, and now stretched out toward its destined goal.

Of what that goal was even the prophets in Israel were but dimly aware (I Pet. 1: 10-11). But that there was a goal was never in doubt. This consciousness of a destiny in time and history for God’s prophetic purpose had deepened with each successive crisis. Without such ultimate destiny historical progress would have been meaningless, a mere wandering out into the darkness, and as empty of spiritual values as were the recurring processes of nature. But with such ultimate destiny historical progress is full of spiritual reality, and guarantees a worthy meaning for human existence.

The form in which that destiny was to be realized began to take shape as time went on. God’s eternal purpose, in the beginning vested in man as man, had, in the course of the development, gradually narrowed down in its field of action. For, in due succession, a race, a nation, a tribe, and, later still, a single household, had become its sole repository. And whenever the chosen line showed signs of natural expansion, this restrictive principle was again seen at work. In this narrowing the far end toward which God was working became more and more evident: it was narrowing toward one Man. The flame of destiny was to burn in a single lamp, which God would ordain for His servant David (Psa. 132: 7). So in the writings of the prophets, when

national hopes were burning low, this note of the advent of a personal Messiah lightened the growing darkness and became the strong consolation of the faithful in Israel.

The advent of this coming Redeemer was to be accompanied by unmistakable signs of the Divine presence and power, so marvelous and many-sided that they would be declared by unbelievers to be not only incredible but impossible.

“Behold ye among the nations, and regard, and wonder marvellously; for I work a work in your days, which ye will not believe though it be told you” (Hab. 1: 5 with Acts 13: 41).

“Like as many were astonished at thee . . . So shall he sprinkle (startle) many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand. Who hath believed our report?” (Isa. 52: 14-53: 1).

The fulness of the times would come. And the events associated therewith would in freshness and originality, in volume and richness, and in direct Divine initiative, completely surpass anything that had preceded them.

According to the confession of Christian faith the Saviour, in His birth, “was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary.” This credal statement is in perfect harmony with Holy Scripture (Matt. 1: 18; Luke 1: 30-35). That we are required to believe in the uniqueness of this birth is plain. The words “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise” stand over against the regular formula of the earlier part of the chapter “Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob . . .” and indicate that the birth of Christ was otherwise than was the birth of these. In Matthew, therefore, the emphasis is laid upon “was conceived by the Holy Ghost.”

The passage in St Luke underlines the mystery contained in the words “born of the virgin Mary.” Such an event, indeed, was “a new thing in the earth,” though anticipated beforetime (Jer. 31: 22). Were it not that the prophetic Scripture had intimated, both by guarded phraseology and by direct statement, that the coming Redeemer should be born of a virgin, we might well have found it difficult to accept the facts; but with such indications given beforehand it becomes equally difficult now to reject them (Gen. 3: 15; Isa. 7: 14). Moreover, unless we discredit the duly authenticated testimony of the Gospels (Luke 1: 1-4), the belief in the virgin birth was not a judgment formed *after* the event, but the response to a revelation received *before* it took place, by those most intimately concerned therewith, namely, Joseph, Elizabeth, and Mary herself. This but strengthens the case. But why

should it be thought incredible that the birth of Him who before His birth had Divine pre-existence should in its manner differ from that of those who before their birth had no existence? The miracle is accounted for by this one great fact, that the Word, who was in the beginning, who was with God, became flesh and dwelt among us. The incarnation makes the Virgin Birth intelligible, but also, we must confess in reverent worship, only deepens its mystery.

The public ministry of the Lord Jesus was one of intense miraculous activity. Supernatural powers were in active exercise. These miracles did more than impress the beholders' imagination; they laid a challenge upon heart and conscience, and called for spiritual decisions. To the Jew, with his knowledge of a new age to come—derived from Messianic prophecy—such visible tokens of God's power as now were seen proclaimed its advent. For the new age was to be inaugurated by an outpouring of the Divine Spirit, first of all upon the coming Redeemer (from which He takes His title of Christ or Anointed), and in due course upon those who came to be associated with him (Isa. 42: 1; 61: 1). The free action of God would fill men with amazement and so widespread would the effects of it become that eventually all flesh would share in the blessings it brought (Joel 2: 28 f.).

The baptism of our Lord, as all four evangelists testify, was the occasion when this anointing took place. The fulness of power characterizing His public ministry was the fitting sequel thereto. According to Mark this is the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And Peter, too, seems invariably to have begun his testimony at this point, as is borne out by his recorded addresses in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 10: 37 f.; 2: 22). The dead were raised, the powers of darkness spoiled of their prey, the sick healed, and Nature made subject to laws higher than her own.

Kings and priests and prophets had been anointed to their several offices in Israel. Their anointing had been with oil, and therefore had a purely typical value: but this was with the very Spirit of whom oil is a symbol, and therefore has the value of absolute spiritual reality. Instances of supernatural anointings of the Spirit, resulting in mighty acts of Divine power, are met with but rarely in Israel's former history. In the book of Judges we read concerning Othniel and Gideon, Jephthah and Samson, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon them, and that consequent thereupon notable deliverances were effected. Such effusions of the Spirit, however, were but temporary, and lacked the perfection and fulness of that holy chrism by virtue of which we recognize God's Christ. *They* belonged to history at a lower

level: *this*, by its unique fulness and permanence, proclaimed that Old Testament history had entered the Messianic Age.

The death and resurrection of Christ form one Divine event, never to be repeated. "For the death that he died, he died . . . once (for all)" (Rom. 6: 10). "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more" (Rom. 6: 9). "Behold, I am alive for evermore" (Rev. 1: 18). Together, they constitute one great action, wholly unique, without precedent in history. The death and resurrection of Christ stand in an order of their own. Other deaths there have been; other resurrections there will be: these take their power from a necessity outside their subjects. "In Adam all die . . . in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15: 22). But this death, and this resurrection, take their power from Him who is their Subject. "I lay down my life, that I might take it again . . . I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10: 17-18). The death and resurrection of Christ therefore transcend all human experience, being the outcome of His Divine nature and almighty power.

How misleading, therefore, may become the popular conception of Eastertide as the symbol of the resurrection of Christ if not safeguarded by Christian faith, as if *His* resurrection had anything in common with the nature-myths expressed in the re-birth of the Sun-god. No, the triumph of Christ is something other than the return of Baldur the Beautiful, or the reappearance of Spring, or the annual recurrence of one of the cycles of Nature. We search the Bible in vain for any such analogy—unless we take the abominations which Ezekiel saw (Ezek. 8: 13-16) as a sort of prolepsis to Christian faith! The season of harvest, it is true, is employed, both in the Old Testament and the New, as a figure of resurrection, but even here we must beware of using the analogy as a support for any idea of naturalistic necessity in the resurrection of Christ. To do so would be to lower the value of the death of Christ from being the final act of a long historical progression to being only one among the many expressions of the ebb and flow of natural processes, and to make Christ Himself a supreme figure merely among the gods many and lords many that provide an object of worship to the natural man. For what gives point to our argument is that, in their relation to the Divine purpose worked out in Old Testament history and in their bearing upon the future, the death and resurrection of Christ constitute the crisis of all time and bestow upon history in its widest aspect the element of dynamic progression.

The essential points may be recapitulated. Israel's national history is a progressive series of original non-recurring events, moving steadily from a given beginning, through a measured

distance, toward a final crisis. It stands in contrast to the pagan view of life in which human existence is expressed in terms of endlessly-recurring processes. The opposing views, with their values for life, are considered critically in the book of Ecclesiastes, with full justice done to the naturalistic world-view. Granting the premises for the latter, everything below the sun is, in the end, without moral result. But if, on the other hand, as the Preacher finds out, God and not nature is to be accepted as the ultimate postulate for history, then life is charged with intense moral meaning. In this view, God controls the destiny of free-willed men and women, being revealed as Creator and Judge of mankind. History is thus brought within the sphere of existential personal relationships between God and men, and its movement is fulfilled in that field. The personal action of God is to be discerned in the course of Old Testament history, and moves forward in a pre-determined sequence of dispensations, each an advance upon those preceding it, and finally culminating in the dawn of the Messianic Age. The advent of Christ, with everything it stands for, completes Old Testament history.

All this goes to show that while history sometimes apparently repeats itself—thus lending colour to a naturalistic interpretation—it never does so in reality. In its course it always rises above and beyond itself, and may be thought of as moving spirally round and along a time-axis, of which Creation and Judgment are the two poles. The time-process is definite, not indefinite; dynamic and personal, not merely mechanical; moral and spiritual in its ultimate significance, not without Divine meaning or eternal consequence. In this fact we have the guarantee of all that makes life worth while, and gives solemn weight to the thought of eternity.

IV

THE NOTE OF CRISIS IN OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY

THE FREE EXISTENCE OF EVIL IN A WORLD ORIGINALLY created good is the great contradiction within history. How and when did this situation of duality originate? Or is it one which in the nature of things always existed? Do good and evil reign with equal right, in eternal dualism? Or has the good an original primacy over evil? The answer will determine our conception of the basic meaning of history. If good and evil alike exist as first principles, the moral values of historical

action disappear. Why repudiate evil, if it be but part of ultimate reality? If, on the other hand, we acknowledge the original sovereignty of good—and therefore its eventual supremacy over evil—man's personal relations toward good and evil become full of consequence, and the goal of history a matter of first importance.

The Bible unhesitatingly proclaims the monism of good: it rejects the idea, developed formally in Zoroastrian thought, that in the nature of all things there exists an eternal dualism. Conflict, indeed, there is between good and evil, but in that conflict the good has divine right; evil is a usurper. Good is symbolized as light; evil as darkness. But the light is uncreated light; the darkness, created darkness. "God is light," we read, "and in him is no darkness at all" (I John 1: 5). All good dwells in God, or springs from God. In an absolute sense, therefore, there is none good save God (Mark 10: 18). And since beside Him there is no other god, it follows that good alone is eternal and all-sovereign.

The world, in the beginning, was, as the creation of God, pronounced very good (Gen. 1: 31). As seen now, it cannot be so described. Evil is present everywhere—evil, not as calamity only, but as spiritual darkness and moral apostasy. Whence, then, came evil, and how has it acquired such potency in the affairs of men? This is not told us in the Bible, except indirectly. A spiritual apostasy from God, within a sphere higher than our own, is darkly hinted at; and with it the existence of a dread being who, because of his pre-eminence in that revolt, came to be known as the prince of darkness. But what is told us—and told us plainly—is that which concerns us as men, namely, how sin entered human history. The story of the Fall is the account of that tragic event. The darkness had come. Hitherto, light, as eternal light, had been manifesting itself in time and space; now, a darkness alien to God's creation had intruded itself into the world of mankind.

The entrance of evil into the world was a direct challenge to the Creator, an open threat to the sovereignty of good; and as such it had to be met by decisive action on the part of God. The free will of man could not possibly limit the sovereignty of God. Although his initial freedom gave man the tragic power to accept God or deny God, this liberty of choice must not be construed as spiritual independence. Man's spiritual freedom was undoubtedly real; nevertheless, it was a freedom bounded by creaturehood. It is beside the point to say that man's spirit exists in abysmal depths of freedom, and that therefore, in the life of the spirit, it is not subject to external authority. Even if we postulate the existence of primordial depths of freedom, out of which man's

spirit has birth, we cannot thereby escape the truth that the creative will of God is prior to every pre-condition of man's spiritual existence and freedom. There is an eternal wisdom, sovereign in its rule, antecedent to all depths, whether of physical nature or of spiritual being. This Divine Wisdom announces itself symbolically in the language of Scripture, saying, "When there were no depths, I was brought forth" (Prov. 8: 24). And we are assured that a compass has been set upon the face of the deep (Prov. 8: 27). Even the unplumbed depths are under His sovereignty! "It is he that hath made us, and we are his" (Psa. 100: 3). So that evil cannot retreat before good and, in the name of freedom, lose itself in a primal void where God is not. "If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there . . . even the darkness hideth not from thee" (Psa. 139: 8, 12). Though Himself light, "He knoweth what is in the darkness" (Dan. 2: 22). Whatever mysteries there are in the origin and constitution of evil, we may be sure that they do not dethrone God as Creator, or render inoperative the sovereignty of good.

If, then, the suzerainty of God over creation is absolute and proper—and the Bible claims for it nothing less—history throughout its whole movement is subject to the jurisdiction of God, and man's original defection from good, and voluntary submission to the powers of evil, was a fit occasion for the exercise of His prerogative. Immediately, therefore, upon Adam's transgression God exercised His right of judgment. Yet justice, though swift, was not summary. Due investigation was made into the circumstances of the case; and before sentence was pronounced, guilt was established. The judgment was not arbitrary. With God it might well have been so, for with Him the facts are not, as in human administration, difficult to come by. Nevertheless, in His Divine wisdom he adopted a deliberate procedure which not only vindicated the righteousness of His judgment and silenced all gainsaying but by its very restraint displayed conscious power to decree and do.

This process of judgment is illustrated also in the succeeding measures of Divine justice down the ages. Sin is allowed time in which to reveal its true character, until a crisis is reached, when God intervenes to assert the sovereignty of righteousness. Movement succeeds movement, each ending in catastrophic judgments, which proclaim in unmistakable fashion the Divine control of events. By these intermediate judgments God holds back the full development of evil until history shall have completed its course, and by them teaches men to anticipate the final judgment, when all history will be brought under His authority.

The instruments of judgment are drawn from many sources.

Creation and history alike provide means for the display of God's power. "All things serve His might." The forces of nature, animate, or inanimate, are instruments of His will—earthquakes, locusts, plagues, pestilence and "stormy wind fulfilling His word." From the moral circumstances in which they function, these natural agencies are seen to be supernaturally regulated. The finger of God is recognized in them, and they smite the conscience of the wrongdoer with the sense of retributive justice. It is not a sufficient objection to say that these phenomena can be referred to natural causes; it must also be explained how it is that they appear with such precision in a given set of circumstances and operate therein with such peculiar moral fitness. Incidents like the crossing of the Red Sea, the collapse of the walls of Jericho, the great hailstorm in the days of Samuel, and the famine of Amos's prophecy, cannot be accounted for on natural grounds alone. Call them natural phenomena if you will, but they are more than that: they are phenomena timed to coincide with particular historical circumstances, and this it is which gives them moral and spiritual significance. They can be explained only on the ground of supernatural control.

The elements of history, not less than those of nature, may, if God so ordain, become the instrument of judgment. The scourge of war has not infrequently been instrumental to Divine judgment upon a nation. Not that war is of God. For war, in an absolute sense, is neither pre-ordained of God, nor inevitable to man, save as a result of man's sin. Like the law of divorce, it has been allowed because of the hardness of men's hearts; but it was not contemplated in the beginning (Matt. 19: 8). Nevertheless, it subserves God's government of world affairs, and in Old Testament times was recognized as a Divine visitation upon the nations. The deliverance of Israel from Amalek, the long-delayed judgment on the Canaanite nations, the overthrow of Pharaoh and his hosts, the capture and fall of Babylon in the days of Cyrus—these and many other such incidents demonstrate a Divine superintendence of events and a powerful and planned control of history.

Primarily these catastrophic breaks into history have the character of "revelation," and are so described in the writings. They are something "made known" or "revealed." The phrase is used as a simple verb in the book of Habakkuk: "In the midst of the years make it known" (Hab. 3: 2). This is revelation, not in word, but in historical action. In the book of the Psalms also, and in the prophecies of Isaiah, similar instances occur, usually in association with the related ideas of retributive justice and saving mercy.

“The Lord hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the nations” (Psa. 98: 2).

“My salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed” (Isa. 56: 1).

Through these mighty acts God made His presence known, and showed “the victory of His right arm” over the powers of evil. They were days of the Lord, man’s day having run its course. In their catastrophic energy age-long growths of evil were broken up, and new epochs established in which salvation was brought to His people. They were thus genuine signs of a supreme Will above the movement of history. They acted as solvents upon “dispensations” when these had served their end and further developments were due. Through them the old order was liquidated and the new set up. And over all these judgments with their powerful historical reformations we are ever conscious of the sovereign presidency of God.

These crises carry into effect various complementary purposes. They have, in the main, a threefold end. According to the point of view taken, they may be described as revelation, retribution, or redemption. As revelation, they are termed in Scripture “wonders,” or “wonderful works of the Lord”; as “mighty acts”; or as something “made known” or “revealed” or “manifested.” As acts of retributive justice they are spoken of as “the righteousnesses (or righteous acts) of the Lord”; or as “the victory of His right arm.” Again, as redemption, they are “the salvation of His people,” or “the deliverance of His people,” or “His saving mercies.” This threefold relation—to God, to evil, and to God’s people—may be illustrated from actual history. In the account of the Flood we have direct action by God, the overthrow of a corrupt world, and the salvation of Noah and his household. In that of the Exodus, we again have Divine intervention, the destruction of the wicked, and the deliverance of God’s people. In that of the fall of Babylon, God’s hand is seen, impiety is punished, and the chosen race restored. In all three, and in numerous like situations, the principle of death and resurrection, of Divine power within and beyond catastrophic judgments, is seen at work, with the separation of the righteous from the wicked as a final issue.

We ask, then, may this note of crisis be found in the death of Christ? Is the death of Christ the spiritual centre of all history? Has that death the quality of revelation, that is, of God’s distinctive personal action? Has it that of “justice,” that is, of evil fully exposed and finally judged? Have God’s people found therein eternal deliverance from the powers of evil? We

have abundant evidence that the death of Christ had this character. The Lord Himself so interpreted His death. In the Gospel of John we have His own words:

“Now is the judgment (Gk. *krisis*) of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out” (John 12: 31).

Throughout His public ministry there runs a deep consciousness of an hour to come in which he would meet in decisive conflict the rulers of the kingdom of darkness. This period of crisis is always associated with the circumstances of His death and resurrection. Scriptures not a few testify to this fact.

“The hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed unto the hands of sinners” (Matt. 26: 45).

“This is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22: 53).

“Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. But for this cause came I unto this hour” (John 12: 27).

“The prince of the world cometh: and he hath nothing in me” (John 14: 30).

“. . . that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2: 14).

This is quite in keeping with the general language of Scripture, both of prophets and apostles. For the sufferings of Jehovah’s Servant were to be, in some mysterious sense, a revelation of the arm of the Lord, by which many would be justified from their iniquities, and evil be so vanquished that He would “divide the spoil with the strong” (Isa. 53: 12).

The event would reveal itself conspicuously as an act of God.

“All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord . . . They . . . shall declare . . . unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done it” (Psa. 22: 27–31).

“The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing” (Psa. 118: 22 f.).

One needs only to read in the book of the Acts to see that the apostles discerned in the death and resurrection of Christ the very hand of God and the illimitable effects of that death in a salvation worldwide in scope and eternal in duration. To show this fully would be to quote from almost every page in the New Testament; whether its teaching be accepted or not, it is the plain intention of the Bible to interpret the death of Christ as “the consummation of the ages” (Heb. 9: 26) and to claim it as being in truth God’s judgment of the world, a judgment wherein He demonstrates His authority over evil and manifests His grace and power in salvation.

Is this interpretation of the death of Christ in accordance with historical fact? Or do we exaggerate when we say that His death was, historically, an event of the first magnitude, followed by results catastrophic in character? Are we justified, for example, in comparing it with an overwhelming disaster like the Flood or with an epoch-making crisis such as the fall of Babylon? May it not be that this interpretation of the facts is due to subjective reasoning induced by religious beliefs? Or are there indeed historical indications that the orthodox view is founded on objective fact, that in the death of Christ (though no universal cataclysm seems to have taken place and Roman history to have rolled on without apparent interruption) something happened which placed all history under the judgment of God?

Jewish history provides an answer. If, as Scripture teaches, the course of Israel is the clue to wider developments in the sphere of history, this is not surprising. Moreover, the Gospels contain a wealth of material illustrating the point now raised. They reveal that one of the almost immediate consequences of the death of Christ would be the devastating overthrow of Jerusalem, and the dispersal of the Jewish race among the nations of the world. Only a few decades passed before this was actually fulfilled, and its extension in history continues right down to our own day. This judgment presents itself as an inevitable consequence of the rejection of Christ. Later history is the outworking of that doom, whose first effects are seen in the fall of Jerusalem.

This moral relation between the death of Christ and the world dispersal of the Jew is not a theory which originated in the Christian conscience after the event had taken place. To reason thus is either to forget the plain words of Christ, or to attribute casuistry to the writers of the New Testament. No doubt the fall of Jerusalem made a profound and lasting impression upon the Christian theology of that day, but it did so because it was a powerful reminder of the truth of the Lord's own words. For it is noteworthy how often in the closing days of His earthly ministry He spoke of this consequence of His death. How deeply He was affected by the thought is evident from the peculiar solemnity of His words in regard to it. The following passages should be carefully read and considered:

“And when he drew nigh, he saw the city and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall cast up a bank about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee: and they

shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Luke 19: 41-44).

“Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers . . . that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of Abel the righteous unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachiah, whom ye slew between the sanctuary and the altar. Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation” (Matt. 23: 32-36).

“But when ye see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that her desolation is at hand. . . . For these are days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. . . . And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21: 20-24).

“But they were instant with loud voices, asking that he might be crucified. . . . And Pilate gave sentence that that what they asked for should be done . . . and there followed him a great multitude of the people, and of women who bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning to them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children . . . For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (Luke 23: 23-31).

Through these formal intimations Christ taught that in His death the Jewish nation would be brought under judgment. They are not isolated utterances spoken under the pressure of the moment, but are the climax of earlier teachings and warnings, given especially in parabolic form. In the parables of the wicked husbandmen, and of the nobleman whose citizens refused his rule, we can read predictions of the nation's rejection of Christ, and of the retribution that would follow it. And did not the children of Israel themselves raise the tragic cry, “His blood be on us, and on our children”? Together, these Scriptures testify to the crisis-character of the death of Christ and to its historical sequel in the sufferings of the Jewish race among the nations of the earth, even down to our own day.

This leads us to enquire whether similar sufferings are yet to be experienced and on a larger scale. If the Jewish nation is suffering in consequence of the rejection of Christ, will the Gentile world escape? Scripture shows that it will not. If judgment has begun at the house of God, what shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel? (I Pet. 4: 17). This accords with ancient prophecy, which warns the Gentiles:

“For lo, I begin to work evil at the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of Hosts” (Jer. 25: 29).

The distress of nations in the latter day, culminating in the great conflict of Armageddon, with its accompaniment of world-wide famine and pestilence, is no imaginary premonition of evil to come, but the logical consequence of a crisis which has brought the whole world under the judgment of God. The cross is therefore in a very real sense the end of natural human history. The outworking of the catastrophe extends into still unaccomplished time, and will only be realized in the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord; but the event itself has already taken place.

The Gospels confirm this. In the Lord’s predictive teaching the judgments which are to take place at the Second Coming are associated with His rejection and sufferings.

“But first he must suffer many things and be rejected of this generation. And as it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man . . . the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise even as it came to pass in the days of Lot . . . it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all: after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of man is revealed” (Luke 17: 25-30).

Here indeed we have some striking parallels with familiar historical crises.

In the Sermon on the Mount of Olives is found an unexpected allusion to a passage in Jeremiah. Had the Lord at that time been meditating on the important prophetic Scriptures dealing with the fall of Babylon, and tracing in them a wider application? The fact that the passage is not given as a set quotation but is simply adapted to the circumstances of the Second Coming is remarkable, and shows that within the Lord’s mind a parallel existed between the fall of Babylon and the tragic features of the great day of wrath yet to come. The two passages may be compared.

“And let not your heart faint, neither fear ye for the rumour that shall be heard in the land, for a rumour shall come in one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler” (Jer. 51: 46).

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: . . . for nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom” (Matt. 24: 6 f.).

Thus it is no exaggeration to speak of the death of Christ as a world-crisis. Though it transcends them it belongs to the same order as the great days of the Lord in the Old Testament history. This judgment, however, unlike those, is absolute and final: in it human history has been accomplished and sealed up.

In all these historical “judgments” evil is overwhelmed and overcome. But beyond the catastrophe lies always a vista of glorious triumph. The new earth upon which Noah and his family stepped out, the rejoicings of Israel upon the further bank of the Red Sea, the restored hopes of God’s people returning from exile, all point to the principle of resurrection as that upon which God will at once secure His victory over evil and bring His people into the freedom of salvation. The resurrection of Christ, likewise, is that which makes the “judgment” effective. It crowns the crisis with victory. The resurrection is God’s assurance to all that the judgment will become universally operative (Acts 17: 31). So that in the death and resurrection of Christ we have a complete and final answer to the problem of the presence of evil in a world originally created good. Even now the situation brought about by sin has been, from God’s viewpoint, brought fully under control, and we are assured, therefore, that evil in all its manifestations shall be finally and effectually subdued. Explicitly, “we see not yet all things subjected to him”; implicitly, we do see this, since “we behold . . . Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour” (Heb. 2: 8-9). He is the guarantee of our faith in the ultimate triumph of good, and of the discomfiture for ever of the forces of evil.

The Second Advent, then, is the sequel to the death and resurrection of Christ. The death of Christ, which is judgment, will be expressed historically in the great day of wrath; the resurrection of Christ, which is victory and salvation, will be realized in the subsequent manifestation of the kingdom of God. The fact that Christ, the living One, became dead, and is now alive for evermore (Rev. 1: 18) makes judgment and victory an accomplished reality to faith. Believers look on the world as already judged, and hold as their reasonable hope the certainty of the manifested kingdom of Christ and the glories of the age to come. Wrath is appointed for the world, but concerning those who have received Christ it is written:

“God appointed us not unto wrath, but unto the obtaining of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him” (I Thess. 5: 9-10).

Therefore it is also written that we are called

“. . . to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised

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 aforesaid 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.

PART II

PROPHECY

VI

THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF
BIBLICAL PROPHECY

A PROPER INVESTIGATION OF THE NATURE OF PROPHECY WOULD require a preliminary survey of its relations to Time, and also of super-rational modes of apprehending truth, but these metaphysical enquiries, however useful when pursued by those qualified to make them, are unnecessary for the purpose of this book, which simply seeks to establish that prophecy, while given through men, comes from God, and that it expresses a whole view of time beyond the power of the human mind to conjecture. This can be done most simply by presenting the Biblical view of the source and origin of prophecy in relation to the will of man.

A familiar statement in Peter's second epistle defines how prophecy came to be spoken, and by a double affirmation, negative and positive, clinches the matter, as if to safeguard itself from possible misunderstanding or deliberate evasion. It runs thus:

"No prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation.

"For no prophecy ever came (lit.: was brought) by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost" (II Pet. 1: 20-21).

That is to say, prophecy did not originate from human impulse. Not only the subject-matter but also the mode and circumstance of communication lay entirely within the power of God. The mind of man may indeed have been chosen to condition its transmission, but never at any time did the will of man initiate the occasion. Prophecy does not come "out of" but "through" the mind of man: it comes "out of" or "from" the mind of God. It is not therefore simply the product of religious genius or spiritual insight. Nor is it a reasoned and intuitive conclusion from comprehended facts, such as might be made by men acquainted with the working of moral law and therefore able to perceive the final issues of human action before these issues were evident to others; or should this occasionally be, it is so under a direct and illuminative impulse of the Holy Spirit. Prophecy is not the fruit of brilliant conjecture or deep sagacity. Yet in denying a purely psychological explanation of the prophetic impulse it does not mean that the Author of the human mind may not, if He

will, make use of its more mysterious powers when making such disclosures to men, through men.

Whether the words "of private interpretation" be taken as referring to the elucidation of the prophecy itself in the mind of hearers, or whether as referring to the illuminative comprehension of future events in the prophet's own mind prior to utterance, makes no difference to the force and truth of the fact appealed to, that "no prophecy ever came by the will of man." If we adhere to the former view, as we may, the whole passage simply means that since prophecy *originated* solely from God, so it can only be *explained* from the same Source, so that no one, prophet or hearer, can elucidate its meaning by his own acuteness of mind. If, however, the other construction be preferred (and there is much to be said for it, despite its difficulties and the adverse judgment of most commentators), the passage means that the interpretation (unloosing) of coming events (often seen in dream or vision) which formed the prelude to the spoken word was not to be accounted for by any private solution in the prophet's own mind, and that this is vouched for by the fact that all prophecy came from God through a motion of the Holy Spirit upon those who uttered it. Either way, the appeal is based upon an accepted fact. The prophets themselves recognized this fact. Daniel asseverated, "There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets . . . But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living" (Dan. 2: 30). And Joseph, in like circumstances, answered and said, "It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace" (Gen. 40: 16).

The prophecies of Scripture have an ultimate bearing beyond that on the situation in which they first were spoken. Doubtless the prophets spoke many things having "occasional" value, which have not been recorded, but which were the voice of God to contemporary hearers. Biblical prophecy is not made up from scattered and unrelated predictions, but forms a grand design, in which each individual unit finds a place. It is not necessary, however, that we should formally systematize the material before we are convinced of its homogeneity. The predictions of things to come given in Isaiah's prophecies claim validity on the ground that they proceed from One who is "the First and the Last," and who knows the end from the beginning. The coherence and interconnexion of prophecy in all its parts is implied in its origin, and casts us back upon the foreknowledge of God.

If prophecy be considered as coming from an ordered pattern of things existing archetypically in the mind of God—though only revealed to us in diverse portions—we shall have a better conception of its scope and purpose. The fulfilment of prophecy will

be seen to bear relations to God's eternal purpose in Christ, as well as to the spoken word of Scripture. Being grounded in the will and foreknowledge of God, prophecy looks upward as well as forward. Like the ritual of the Levitical economy it is in some sense a shadow of things heavenly and eternal as well as a pre-figuration of things to come. True, prophecy in the strict sense is confined to the spoken or written word, but are not the types and shadows of the law themselves prophecies "of good things to come" that had their fulfilment in Christ, as also are the histories of Messianic persons like David and Solomon? The importance of Bible prophecy lies in the fact that it lifts history from the plane of natural evolution to that of spiritual purpose, and shows it to be an ordered scheme of events grounded in the decisions of the Divine will.

Scripture presents prophecy, however, not in a formal programme but in scattered fragments and partial disclosures, here a little and there a little, "at sundry times and in divers manners." Men have sought by induction and by comparison of Scripture with Scripture to build up a comprehensive and orderly and chronological view of things to come. But it cannot be said that any such scheme or chart or outline commands universal assent, and while such enquiry has Scriptural sanction, it must be recognized that such humanly compiled prophetic schemes are only provisional and never final. Charts, for example, are useful as provisional aids toward a better understanding of the relation of events, but they cannot receive the same unquestioning acceptance that the written Word in its simple form claims for itself. Even when made by godly, intelligent and spiritually-minded men, they are at best human interpretations of Divine truth, and of dispensational workings not yet fully explained to us, which will only become clear when He who is their sum and substance is manifested in glory. Meantime, however, we may with due humility of mind and eager interest desire, like the angels, to "look into" these things, or like the disciples, "ask questions" about them, or like the prophets themselves, "enquire and search diligently." Much confusion has been wrought by conjectural dating and by fixed chronological sequences, made sometimes with only slight support from individual texts capable, when read without bias, of other equally possible constructions. In such instances, more is generally read into or taken from the verse than it actually "says," and inductions are given the same validity as the plain word of Scripture. The proper study of prophecy has thus been brought into disrepute, and believers discouraged from entering thereupon. Even *fulfilled* prophecy is more safely considered when a particular or supposed fulfilment has the

plain warrant of Scripture and does not depend upon human ingenuity.

For the Divine foreknowledge consists not only of things that have been revealed, but also, as Scripture itself affirms, of much that has been kept secret, so that our knowledge of the future is subject to a double limitation. Of what has been revealed much is beyond the power of our minds fully to grasp, and beyond this, there is that vast secret territory of which man knows nothing. "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but the things that are revealed belong unto us . . . that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29: 29). Many of these things "kept secret" have, it is true, been revealed during a later stage in Divine revelation, as the letters of the Apostle Paul prove. But we do well to remember that Scripture has its silences and reservations, which are to be honoured as much as its open speech. It is not merely that there are things we do not know, but that there are things which are not for us to know, but reserved solely to God's knowledge. In studying Scripture we may unwittingly, in our very eagerness, ask the wrong kind of questions as well as give the wrong answers. Even the disciples did this, and were rebuked by the Lord, as when, in reply to their question, "Lord, dost thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said, "It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath set within his own authority" (Acts 1: 7). "It is for you," He said, "to bear witness to Me." The diligent discharge of plain Christian duties leaves little time for unprofitable speculations. Again, after giving precise details of signs by which the disciples would recognize the imminence of that concerning which He had just spoken, namely, the then future destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24: 33-35 with v. 2), the Lord goes on to describe the contrast of manner in which the Second Advent would take place, saying, "But of *that* day and hour knoweth no one, . . . neither the Son: . . . watch therefore." The Son's acceptance of the fact that this was something that the Father had kept in His own power ought to rebuke human presumption in anything approaching date-fixing, either of day or hour. So that our approach to the study of prophecy ought to be conditioned by the utmost humility of mind as well as by simple faith and confidence in the Word of God. It ill becomes us to assume that we have so grasped in complete detail the whole course of future events as to be able to allocate almost every verse of Scripture to its proper setting in Divine prophecy.

But systems of prophecy become harmful only when they are elevated into fixed schemes, and made so sacrosanct as to deter further enquiry into such subjects. To clarify in our minds the

wide, extensive scope of prophecy we naturally classify, arrange, analyse, dispensationalize, so as to have a clear picture of the parts in relation to the whole. But this systematization of prophecy has often led to a rigidity that we do not find in the Scriptures, where, as in creation, everything has a richness and complexity and interaction which, though it is beyond the mind of man fully to comprehend, produces an impression of grandeur and sublimity that evokes admiration and worship.

Even without a rigidly-formulated programme of coming events in our mind, how much there is in Scripture to reassure our minds on all matters essential to right Christian thought and living, and to warn us against wrong paths. The hope of resurrection to mitigate the present experience of mortality, the promise of future glory to compensate present reproach for Christ, the special "Word of the Lord" in I Thess. 4 to give assurance that those who have fallen asleep will not miss the blessedness of the Lord's Parousia, the final judgment of the Beast and the false prophet, comforting persecuted saints in their present distress, the last judgment, casting a sombre shadow on the human heart of the terrible consequences of continuing in sin and refusing God's Saviour. *This* is how prophecy is meant to be studied: *this* is how we are to approach even such characteristically apocalyptic writings as the book of *Daniel* and the *Revelation*. Prophecy is given to serve moral and spiritual ends, rather than to minister to mere intellectual curiosity. While there are certain great landmarks of prophetic truth familiar to all diligent readers of the Bible, few are so explicitly explained as to enable us to understand their exact mode and time and occasion of fulfilment; so that in this, as in much else, we live by faith rather than by full knowledge. The manner in which God has been pleased to give us His Word leaves room for much patient study and reflection.

In considering prophecy we must also avoid the temptation of relating current world affairs to particular predictions of catastrophe. One would have thought that the outcome of end-of-the-world scares in the past would have put an end to this abuse. Naturally, those who are nearest to events are most impressed by them, but if we would read past history we would see that in former ages also there were great periods of crisis, involving whole continents, as when, for example, Rome fell before the Goths, or when Europe was in danger of being overrun by the Turkish Ottoman power. At such times people's minds instinctively anticipated the end of the world: it seemed the end of the world as *they* knew it, the dissolution of the established order of things. It was in such a time, and with such an expectation, that the hymn was written, well-nigh eight hundred years ago, by Bernard of Cluny:

“The world is very evil
The times are waxing late,
Be sober and keep vigil,
The Judge is at the gate.”

To believers of that day, no doubt, this seemed indisputable, as *our* experience does to us, but while these “overturnings” (Ezek. 21: 27) admittedly adumbrate the final conditions of the last days, we must not lose our sense of proportion or forget that with the Lord a thousand years are as one day (II Pet. 3: 8). Prophecy, with its vision of the Lord coming to judge the world in righteousness, is meant to help us in such times. Bernard of Cluny even, amid what to him was impending disaster, could lift up his eyes to see “Jerusalem the golden, with milk and honey blest.” And king David in time of dire calamity could comfort himself with the thought, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” thereby implying that the foundations could never be destroyed, for he continues, “The Lord is in his holy temple” (Psa. 11: 3-4). The word to Habakkuk, when *his* world was falling in pieces, was, “Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not delay” (Hab. 2: 3). To us this Scripture has been paraphrased in the New Testament, “He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry” (Heb. 10: 37). How much better it is to wait for a living Saviour than even for the event itself! We are, indeed, as elsewhere reminded, called to “the patience of Christ” (II Thess. 3: 5), and any resolution of present difficulties by forestalling God’s time can only lead to frustration and disappointment, and to the serious weakening of our faith. The rise of Mussolini was hailed by many as the actual beginning of the revived Roman empire, only to be discredited by the event; and the recent establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine has made explanations necessary to account for an event that does not fit in with a previously conceived scheme of prophetic interpretation. Such rebukes from history should teach wisdom. God is His own interpreter, not only of providence, but also of His Word.

The position here taken that prophecy is literally Divine oracle (so that the Scriptures in which it is enshined are fitly termed “the oracles of God”) explains why the Old Testament so frequently speaks to us in the first person, as if the Lord Himself were present and giving the message, and also why the prophets in their delivery of prophecy should be so careful to preface their utterances by a “Thus saith the Lord.” That such language was no figure of speech or poetic hyperbole the New Testament makes clear, for again and again it alludes to these prophetic utterances as being made by God Himself by the mouth of the prophets; that they were, in fact, “oracles.” To give only one or two instances:

“How then doth David in the Spirit call him Lord?”
(Matt. 22: 43).

“It was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost spake before by the mouth of David . . .” (Acts 1: 16).

“The things, which God foreshewed by the mouth of all prophets . . .” (Acts 3: 18).

“The Holy Ghost also beareth witness to us: for after he hath said . . .” (Heb. 10: 15).

A like oracular manner of speech is found in the book of the *Revelation*, which commences with the phrase, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.” The added words, “which God gave him,” interpret this title as meaning that it is revelation given to and coming from Him rather than revelation concerning Him, though this also is by no means absent from the book. The *Revelation*, therefore, has as its ultimate author Christ Himself, being conveyed through angelic agency to His servant John, who in turn committed it to writing. The book records a series of visions in which Christ is present, either as actually speaking, or as the One from whose authority and knowledge these prophetic visions unfold. Whether it be the letters to the seven churches, or the apocalyptic visions of the time to come, Christ is the active Subject from whom these messages proceed, so that the whole may be fitly termed, as indeed it is, “The Revelation of Jesus Christ.”

Consider the strictly personal forms of address throughout the book, reminiscent of the way in which God announced Himself through Old Testament prophecy.

“I am the first and the last, and the living one” (1: 18).

“I am the Alpha and the Omega . . ., the first and the last”
(22: 13).

“I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star” (22: 16).

Observe, too, the direct language in which the churches are addressed. John does not say, indirectly, “He knows,” “He counsels thee,” but simply records direct speech, “These things saith he, I know thy words . . . I counsel thee.” In the last chapter we have even more startling instances of verbal directness: “I, Jesus, have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. . . . Yea, I come quickly” (Rev. 22: 16, 20). And the terrible judgments unfolded in the main section of the book all lead back to one central vision, that of One whose prerogative it is to take the sealed roll and to break each several seal. This manner of speech is, in the strict and original sense of the word, prophecy—the voice of God speaking through the

mouth of man. Its predictive quality derives from this fact, though incidental to it.

The mode by which these visions were communicated to John is, to our human understanding, very mysterious. All we know is that it was through angelic agency (1: 1). In this it has analogies with Old Testament prophecy. Visions presenting truth under like symbolic imagery were given to Daniel, Zechariah, and Ezekiel, and were likewise mediated through angels, so that it would appear that truth can be apprehended visually as well as verbally. Be that as it may, the glory of prophecy is that it comes from God and that it is given to men in order to create faith in Christ. However important it may be to have a proper understanding of "things to come," and no one would wish to minimize a desire for this where it is followed with due regard to the limits set upon it by Holy Scripture, a still more important thing is that we should so come under the dominant vision of Christ in His regal offices as to see in perspective the whole panorama of human history in relation to Him. For the great end of prophecy is not merely to supply information on a prophetic programme but to support the faith of believers and to inspire acclamation and worship. So manifold is the presentation of Christ in this copestone of Divine prophecy that throughout its pages title after title rings out in royal proclamation, "King of kings and Lord of lords," "Prince of the kings of the earth," "The bright and morning star," "The Lion of the tribe of Judah," "The first begotten of the dead," "The beginning of the creation of God." It is as if the full splendour of His glory would here break forth above all time and space in the pure radiance of eternity: yet is that glory caught from what He accomplished when incarnate upon earth. He who sits upon the Divine throne and receives the adoration of heaven and earth does so as the One whose hands were pierced by sinful men, does so as the Lamb that once was slain, even as He "that loved us and loosed us from our sins by His blood."

VII

THE NOTE OF LAW IN OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

THE BOOK OF THE LAW IS THE SUBSTRATUM OF OLD TESTAMENT prophecy. Beneath the whole structure of prophecy, with its predictions, promises, warnings, and visions of the future, rests the supporting authority of Divine law.* What is

**Note:* The word *law* is used throughout in this chapter in a moral and ethical rather than in a legalistic sense.

prophecy if not affirmation that the heavens do rule, that righteousness and mercy are the pillars of God's throne? Are not the commandments themselves prophecies that God's will shall be done on earth as in heaven, that anarchy and sin shall not triumph finally, and that eventually "all enemies shall be put under His feet"? Prophecy is conformable to its original source and upholds the supremacy of Divine law in the affairs of men. The Prayer-book version of *Psa.* 99: 1 gives the basic presupposition of all prophecy:

"The Lord is King, be the people never so impatient:
He sitteth between the cherubims, be the earth never so
unquiet."

Recognition of this fact led commentators in the last century to shift the emphasis from fore-telling to forth-telling, and in so far as this restored in men's minds a stronger sense of ethical values and of the sanctity of Divine law it was salutary. Extravagances of prophetic interpretation, however, should not hinder us from recognizing also an authentic predictive note in prophecy. Why should not prediction be thought of as retaining ethical value, especially when coupled, as it so often is, with promises of reward and threats of punishment?

The Fall in Eden disrupted the rule of the heavens on earth. The first subsequent action on God's part was to affirm that, by the crushing of the serpent's head, this rule would be restored, albeit through suffering, for in treading down the foe, the heel of the conqueror would be bruised. The language, appropriately, is gnomic—comprehensive rather than explicit and detailed. The passage ranks as the first prophecy of Holy Scripture.

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and
between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and
thou shalt bruise his heel" (*Gen.* 3: 15).

The enmity between the two seeds, the persecution of God's people by the seed of the serpent, the final triumph of Christ and His people over Satan—these are the essential elements of all prophecy. Different phases of the conflict form the immediate subject of particular prophecies, but the final character of all is the Divine law of righteousness inherent in God Himself. To recognize this is much more important than to be able to chart a programme of events.

The kingdom of God is the grand subject of prophecy. We must not take this exclusively as referring to an earthly kingdom, but in the broad sense of God's rule being established throughout all places of His dominion, as *Psalm* 103: 19-22 puts it. Things in heaven and things under the earth, as well as things on the

earth, are to be subjected to His authority. Prophecy "soars with no middle flight," but rising above time and space "asserts eternal Providence, and justifies the ways of God to men." That God in his sovereignty should disclose His purpose to mankind so that they, because of it, might turn from their evil ways and rank themselves on the side of righteousness, shows thoughts of mercy and longsuffering on His part toward the human race. He might well have acted without previously making known the issues of the conflict, for He is accountable to none (Job 33: 13). Prophecy is therefore, even when denouncing in judgment, a pledge of the goodwill of God toward man. The prophets are the evangelists of the Old Testament.

The test for all pretended prophetic utterance is laid down in the book of Isaiah, chapter 8, verse 20:

"To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, surely there is no morning for them." Even if, having regard to Isaiah's earlier instruction in verse 16, "Bind thou up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples," we refer (probably rightly) the sanction mentioned to the prophet's own writings, the broad principle remains. The law is the Torah, the basic teaching or doctrine: the testimony is the covenant-witness thereto laid up before the Lord, as were the two tables of stone, which are spoken of as the tables of testimony, and the ark in which they were deposited "the ark of the testimony." To these, as to an appointed standard, all teachings and prophecies were to be referred. What did not conform thereto had no light, but belonged to the darkness. This again shows how essentially the book of the law enters into all Old Testament prophecy, just as in the New Testament the four Gospels enter into all the Epistles.

Enoch, whom Jude speaks of as the seventh from Adam, is the great prophet of the antediluvian age. A holy man, he received testimony that in his life he pleased God, and was translated that he should not see death. His character fitted him to be a recipient of Divine prophecy, and though Scripture preserves no record of his utterances except for one small fragment, that fragment is enough to show the essential nature of his message.

"Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones.

"To execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 14, 15).

Only a man who was a pillar of righteousness in an age when the earth was rapidly becoming corrupt through sin and violence

could have spoken such words. The burden of his message is the execution of judgment upon all, with particular reference to the conviction of the ungodly. The immediate force of the prediction was doubtless realized in the judgment of the Flood, but like all local prophecy it was proleptic of larger issues and looked forward to the final suppression of evil in the great day of the Lord.

Noah, also, being warned of God of "things not seen as yet," became "a preacher of righteousness," a term almost synonymous with "prophet." The spirit of prophecy in Noah led him to foresee that the Flood was grounded in moral values. God had declared to him, "The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them" (Gen. 6: 13). Noah, like Enoch, walked with God, and was upright in his generations, so he saw the Flood not only as a coming event but as a moral retribution upon evil: this became the root of his preaching. Being grounded on the Word of God, however, it was something more than natural morality, and partook of the nature of faith, making him an heir of God's righteousness (Heb. 11: 7).

A striking parallel, but with happier results, is found in the preaching of the prophet Jonah, who cried through the streets of Nineveh, that wicked city, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown." This refusal to make terms with evil, and stern warning of inevitable retribution, is characteristic of the message of the prophets, yet with it the door of mercy is not irrevocably closed if hearers are thereby led to repentance and amendment of their ways. "I have published righteousness in the great congregation" (Psa. 40: 9) was as much, and more, the duty of the prophet as to predict things to come, for the latter sprang out of the former. Although only eight souls were saved in the ark, Scripture reminds us that in the days of Noah, when the ark was a-preparing, God waited in longsuffering (I Pet. 3: 20), not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (II Pet. 3: 9). Nevertheless, righteousness must be vindicated and prophecy fulfilled: on the expiry of the appointed season of grace God brought in the flood of waters upon the world of the ungodly.

Moses, as lawgiver, the spokesman of God to Israel, must be regarded as a major prophet, one, indeed, so unique in his calling as to be a type of that greater Prophet whom God was to send among men. It was said unto Moses, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth" (Deut. 18: 18). Although in his parting charge to Israel and in his celebrated Song Moses utters majestic prophecies foretelling the course of Israel's history into the far future and also predicting the final triumph of the Lord over all His

adversaries, Moses' prophethood in Deut. 18: 18 refers primarily to his proclamation of the Divine commandments. The response called for is not intelligent apprehension of a future programme but practical obedience to God's law. "He shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him." This basic prophecy was cited by Peter to the people gathered in Solomon's porch as referring to Christ (Acts 3: 22-23). Stephen refers to its utterance as one of the distinguishing marks of Moses' greatness, saying, "This is *that* Moses which said (these words) unto the children of Israel" (Acts 7: 37:), thereby also tacitly applying the terms of the prophecy to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The warnings found in the epistle to the Hebrews are drawn from the same source, and one passage makes explicit reference to it. If, as the epistle reminds us, "Moses (as prophet) indeed was faithful in all his (God's) house as a servant," it was "for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken (by Christ)" (Heb. 3: 5). This fact underlies the solemn admonitions contained in such passages as Heb. 2: 1-3; 10: 28-29; 12: 25-26. John, too, in the Revelation, describing the victors over the Beast as they stood on the sea of glass, having the harps of God, writes, "And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15: 3), thus linking Mosaic prophecy with Messianic fulfilment.

The Old Testament writings are summarized as "the Law and the Prophets." Moses represents the former, Elijah the latter. Both dispensations were introduced by confirmatory miracles, but the testimony once established, signs were largely withdrawn. The signs and wonders wrought by the Lord Jesus at the beginning of the Gospel age provide a New Testament parallel.

Elijah has left no written prophecies, but his spirit animates all the later prophets. His public ministry, recorded in the first and second books of the Kings, stands as a norm for the prophetic office. His task was to turn back the heart of the people to the Lord, and the means by which he sought to fulfil this task were derived from reflection on the law of the Lord (*cf.* Deut. 11: 17 with I Kings 17: 1), followed by earnest prayer (James 5: 17), and fearless proclamation of God's judgment on sin. He found in the majesty of the law support as a prophet, and so was able to speak with authority and power. When outward circumstances were discouraging and he failed in heart and in his ministry, it was in Horeb that he sought retreat and strength. There, at the mount of God, where Moses had received the tables of the cove-

nant, the Lord reassured His servant that Divine omnipotence had many ways of securing its ends, and that the law would not perish from the earth, even if those who kept it were hidden for a time from the public eye.

The spirit of Elijah left its mark upon Israel. He became the prototype of the promised forerunner of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, the messenger of the Lord of hosts, who should prepare the hearts of the people for His coming and make straight the way of the Lord. Malachi's prophecy takes up a reproach against the priests because they had neglected to teach the law, and through partiality in its administration had caused many to stumble in it (Mal. 2: 7, 8, 9). But the wicked are warned that a day was coming when they would be burned up like stubble, when righteousness would shine forth like the sun, and the Lord would vindicate those who feared His name in an evil time. Hear his final admonition, which is entirely in the manner and spirit of Old Testament prophecy, and fitly closes the canon of Old Testament Scripture.

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, even statutes and judgments.

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord shall come:

"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4: 4-6).

These verses sum up the relation between Moses and Elijah, between the book of the law and the prophetic writings. The mission of prophecy is to turn the hearts of those to whom it is addressed back to the fundamental precepts of the law—righteousness, truth, mercy, love, judgment, things that in every age the Lord requires of men. Prophecy, to take the New Testament paraphrase of Malachi, seeks to "turn the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him" (Luke 1: 17). Those who do this are "the wise" (the teachers), who, as Daniel puts it, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament: turning many to righteousness, they shall shine as the stars for ever (Dan. 12: 3). Note, however, that the wisdom here spoken of is not intellectual but moral: it is "the wisdom of the just" not "the wisdom of the wise." Here again, by the very language used, we are reminded that prophecy has to do with moral and spiritual issues rather than with mental curiosity. Throughout all Old Testament prophecy runs this strong sense of law. This should instruct us how we are to study prophecy, and still more, how we are to use it in public ministry.

The Old Testament flows into the New. Too much has been made of the supposed interregnum between the dispensations, the long period of silence between Malachi and St. Matthew. True, the canon of Old Testament Scripture had been completed, but that which was already written was in full force until the coming of the New. "All the prophets and the law prophesied until John," we read (Matt. 11: 13). Malachi's prophecy found fulfilment and extension in the ministry of John the Baptist. Incidentally, the law equally with all the prophets is here said to have prophesied, though in this, as its secondary place in the verse shows, it yields priority to the prophets more strictly considered.

This smooth transition from the Old into the New is illustrated also in the *Magnificat* and in the *Benedictus*, which hail Christ as the fulfilment of what had been spoken by "His holy prophets, which have been since the world began" (Luke 1: 70), and also as the Dayspring or Branch ushering in the brightness of a new day and restoring the kingly line to Israel.

Mark speaks of the advent of John as being "the beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1: 1), so that the ministry of John the Baptist not only consummates that of the prophets but inaugurates the ministry of the Gospel, and thus becomes the vital link between the Old and New Testaments. Acts 1: 22 speaks likewise: the first qualification of apostolic witness is acquaintance with the facts of the Gospel "beginning with the baptism of John." John's message therefore has equally important relation with the law and the prophets, and with the Gospel. The majesty of the Divine law is not diminished by the advent of Christ, though its glory be eclipsed thereby. "The law was given by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1: 17). The saying, so far from belittling the law (though affirming that grace and truth surpass it), is itself derived in language and content from the book of the Law (Ex. 34: 6).

John's one great concern was to insist upon repentance and righteousness in view of the imminence of the kingdom of God. It was the moral issues of that near event, rather than its predictive foreshadowing, which moved him. His stern words to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to the publicans and sinners, to the Pharisees and Sadducees, to the rude soldiery, and to such individuals as Herod the tetrarch, uphold the sanctity of the law and are reinforced by the voice of prophecy. Mercy, however, tempered warnings of judgment to come, for John urged his hearers that "they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Jesus" (Acts 19: 4), to which agree the words of John 1: 7. His ministry was characterized by a conspicuous absence of miracle (John 10: 41), and by a plain adherence to the

familiar teachings of the Divine law. To John the law and the prophets were the heralds of the Gospel.

If the facts outlined have any weight we may expect to find in the New Testament confirmation of the truth here affirmed, that the note of law gives substance and support to all Old Testament prophecy. Nor is such confirmation lacking, for in the manifesto of the kingdom, uttered by the Lord Jesus Himself, these words are found:

"Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil.

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished.

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5: 17-19).

The law is here selected to exemplify the fundamental principle laid down, though the reference to the Prophets makes it clear that the entire range of the Old Testament is in view, and that the findings which apply to the law apply with equal fitness to the writings of the Prophets. That the fulfilment of Scripture should thus be connected with moral precepts rather than with typical or predictive passages but serves to accentuate the prophetic character of ALL Scripture. Even the precepts of the law are in themselves prophecies of a coming kingdom, when God's will shall be done in earth, as it is in heaven: and thus the integrity of the law of Moses becomes a pledge of the perfection and supremacy of God's rule in a day to come.

"One jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." In these words the Lord certifies the unity and structural coherence of the writings of Moses. They affirm that the fulfilment of a particular Scripture does not cancel its spiritual function. The minutest portion must preserve the integrity of the whole, as well as fulfil its individual office. It does not pass out of view until all are in sight: it is not relaxed until the whole is in force. The binding force of one precept is not to be dissociated from the moral unity of the complete law, and is bound up with the maintenance of this balanced perfection of the whole.

The law, therefore, as a concept, is one and indivisible. Transgression is looked upon, not as the violation of a single commandment merely, but as the destruction of a Divine harmony, a breach upon the law's solidarity. So that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is

become guilty of all" (James 2: 10). If the law were not the expression of a Divine unity, disobedience thereto could not fitly be so spoken of. The writings of the law are thus correlated with the majestic circle of God's perfections, each several part of the writings contributing to the final harmony.

This correlation of the law and the Prophets with God's good and perfect will for man shows how intensely practical for life is the unity of Holy Scripture; and in particular, how essential it is to preserve a true reverence for each several Scripture if we are to stand complete in all the will of God. The full sum of Christian perfection, and of Christian usefulness, is expressly stated to be contingent upon the inspiration and due function in Christian experience, of "every Scripture."

"Every Scripture is inspired of God, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for discipline which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Tim. 3: 16, mar.).

There is a real correspondence between the wholeness of Christian character and the wholeness of Scripture. Perfect cloth is not wrought upon an imperfect loom.

Legislation, however, may be perfect technically, yet defective in administration. But it belongs to the perfection of the law that its very least commandment will be fulfilled in the coming kingdom of God. Of this very fact the Lord here pledges in terms the most explicit the success of His mission into the world, and the inviolability of His spoken word, thus binding His personal integrity with that of securing, to the last particular, God's rule, as this is foreshadowed in the Old Testament Scriptures.

If the Author of creation and the Source of Scripture are indeed one, the sanction for the prophetic revelation committed to writing by Moses and the prophets rests on an authority not less secure than that which maintains the structure of the material universe. So it is written, "Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished." The Scriptures cannot be broken: they will retain their integrity throughout all generations until finally supreme over the events of time. Thus their prophetic utterances, based on Divine law, have unity and purpose. From the chaos of the years emerges a Divinely created cosmos, reducing to order the rude elements of man's long story. This fact is implicit within the promised fulfilment of the prophetic Word concerning God's kingdom among men.

The moral issues of prophecy appear very clearly in that book

of the New Testament which gathers up the sum of all Biblical prophecy, namely, the Revelation. The blessing promised in the Apocalypse is for those who read and *keep*, and for those who hear and *keep*, the sayings of the book—a blessing twice pronounced, once at the beginning, and once near the end of the book (Rev. 1: 3; 22: 7). Moreover, after saying, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand" (and thus affirming the relevance of prophecy to the march of human history), the angel goes on to declare as the culminating issue of the prophetic message, "He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still: and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still: and he that is holy, let him be made holy still" (Rev. 22: 11). Could any more effectual way be found of expressing the ethical ends of prophecy?

It has already been noted that the book of the Revelation gathers up the sum of all Biblical prophecy. Its pages are crowded with well-known metaphors and familiar prophetic images from the Old Testament, and its visions abound in verbal allusions to like visions given to the earlier prophets. Thus this book more than any other, perhaps, gives the reader an impression of the cosmic and all-embracing sweep of prophecy as the co-ordinating factor of the times and seasons that make up the sum of human history. It is therefore important to note that in such a book the ethical values of Divine prophecy hold such a high place, and form an important element in giving unity to the whole. This is what is here meant by the note of law in Old Testament prophecy.

VIII

THE NOTE OF PREDICTION IN OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

THE WORD PROPHECY, IN ITS PRIMARY SENSE, SIGNIFIED ONE who was the mouthpiece of a god, the oracle or its interpretation being termed *prophecy*. A familiar instance of this usage is found in the relation of Aaron to Moses. "He shall be unto thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be unto him instead of God" (with this difference, however, that Aaron was merely spokesman for Moses, not the direct vehicle of Moses' own speech). Aaron thus became Moses' prophet and stood in some such relation to him as did subsequently the prophets in Israel to God. Taking it thus, prophecy is the voice of Deity speaking

through the mouth of a man, so that those who define prophecy as forth-telling rather than fore-telling have much to justify their point of view. But to define prophecy simply as forth-telling so as to exclude the element of prediction is to give a wholly inadequate and in certain respects a misleading account of the matter, the more so since it is often done to eliminate what is ironically termed "anticipated history." But since with God the future is as the present, prophecy moves freely in the time-sequence, and so has come to mean (from our standpoint) that which foretells the future or brings to light some Divine mystery. This being so, reluctance to admit a predictive element in prophecy is strangely prejudiced. It must be said, however, that a view of prophecy confining its main interest to the fulfilment of isolated predictions misses much of its grandeur as the revelation of a comprehensive scheme of things within the mind of God. The note of prediction is indeed an important element in prophecy, but it rises out of the antecedent truth that He from whom prophecy comes is what He is—the great I AM of heaven and earth, omniscient over the ultimate horizons of time and space. That prophecy is the word of God precedes its value as prediction of the future.

The view, however, that Biblical prophecy is mere religious propaganda ("the events of the author's time set within a spurious frame of ancient history," as one critic puts it) wholly fails to explain how prediction and event came to be associated subsequently in the minds of Christian men. The theory of pious fraud or pious impersonation, undetected until the age of literary criticism, puts too great a strain upon credulity. Account must be taken of the fact that the prophets themselves were aware that the things of which they wrote belonged to a later age, and though in many instances the writers had only a dim perception of the actual historical events of which they spoke, they certainly knew that what they wrote concerned a generation yet to come. Such at least is the plain language of I Peter 1: 12.

"To whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto you, did they minister these things, which now have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you."

Scattered throughout the writings of the prophets are plain intimations that the things written would come to pass "in the latter days." Even if, according to Hebrew usage, such time-phrases be taken as referring to the indefinite future it shows that a period of time subsequent to that in which the prophet spoke was intended. Cf. Daniel 2: 28. Such phrases are too numerous to be ignored, and are a marked feature of Old Testament

prophecy. The prophet Daniel was instructed to "shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end" (Dan. 12: 4), and the Lord's last word to him was, "Go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and shalt stand in thy lot, at the end of the days" (Dan. 12: 13). If this be not indubitable proof that Daniel's writings were intended to be taken as predictive, words have no meaning. Daniel's lot is still vacant, but it will one day be redeemed, as also will his prophecies.

It cannot be too strongly stressed that it is in retrospect from a later age that prophecy reaches its full meaning and thereby is confirmed as having been in truth the Word of God. But even before fulfilment came prophecy was regarded as a disclosure of things to come. If prophecy had no predictive value in Jewish estimation why should the chief priests and scribes (the professional interpreters of Old Testament Scripture) have quoted Micah 5: 2 as referring to something which to them was even still an unaccomplished event, but one certain of ultimate fulfilment? (Matt. 2: 5-6). It is not as though they had read the event into the prophecy, but that while as yet (as far as *they* knew) nothing had happened, the prophecy was considered as predicting an event yet to be. So that both the prophets themselves, and the Jewish people as a whole, held the prophetic Scriptures to be a Divine revelation of things to come. If any question arises it can only be whether this belief was justified or not: the New Testament supplies the answer.

Although the disciples of the Lord Jesus shared the hopes of their Jewish brethren it was not until after the resurrection that they came fully to identify the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament with the Lord Jesus. Their view of prophecy as predictive of a coming Messiah was not therefore conditioned in the first instance by the correspondence which they afterward came to see between prediction and event. So that in this respect their belief in the predictive nature of prophecy did not depend upon realized fulfilment but sprang from the expectation of "things hoped for," in other words, from religious faith. It was not pious imagination reading back into Scripture elements that for them did not exist there already. They did not invent evidence from history in order to substantiate earlier prophecy. From study of prophecy and from inherited Jewish convictions they already looked for "One who was to come," and their new-found belief was that in Jesus of Nazareth this One *had* come, as the following Scriptures show:

"Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (John 1: 45).

Once the resurrection was an accomplished fact and they had been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, they entered as it were a new world of thought and experience, in which the writings of the prophets became in large measure an open book. Due consideration, however, shows that this new insight came from teaching given them by the Lord Jesus both before and after His resurrection, teaching which at first they had been slow of heart to understand but which in the end became the mainstay of their confession. Much attention has been given to the post-resurrection teaching of the Lord on this matter, as if it were a new development in His teaching, an idea due largely to the place it has in St. Luke's Gospel, chapter 24, where we read such words as these:

"Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?"

"And beginning from Moses and from all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

". . . And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures (Luke 24: 26, 27, 32).

"And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me.

"Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the Scriptures;

"And said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day" (Luke 24: 44-46).

Yet in so speaking to them *after* His resurrection He was but continuing under new and illuminating conditions that same teaching which He had already been giving them *before* His resurrection. He specifically says, "These are the things which I spake *while I was yet with you*, thus drawing their attention to teachings which at the time they had been too blind to understand.

Doubtless this refers to the three recorded occasions when He intimated in a peculiarly solemn way the imminence of His sufferings and death. The Lutheran version of the Bible notes these in sequence as the first, second, and third intimation of His sufferings, thus giving them a formal sanctity. Each of the Synoptic Gospels records all three, so that we have a full picture of these several occasions. Taken together, they form an impressive episode in the Lord's ministry. The first was at Caesarea Philippi immediately after Peter's confession that Jesus

was the Christ, and therefore was peculiarly appropriate to the occasion (Matt. 16: 21; Mark 8: 31; Luke 9: 22). Its substance was fourfold, namely:

That He must go up to Jerusalem,

And suffer many things of the elders, and chief priests, and scribes,

And be killed,

And be raised again the third day.

The other two speak in similar terms, but Luke's account of the last occasion adds significantly these words:

"All things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished" (Luke 18: 31).

The second intimation was given during a journey in Galilee (Matt. 17: 22; Mark 9: 30; Luke 9: 43), and following as it does the transfiguration and healing of the demoniac may reflect the Lord's conversation on the mount with Moses and Elias concerning the decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9: 31; Mark 9: 12). The third occasion was on that last processional journey up to Jerusalem (Matt. 20: 17; Mark 10: 32; Luke 18: 31). They were on the road, the Lord walking in front wearing an aspect of Divinity that overawed His few immediate disciples, who in turn were followed by the multitude. He called to Him the twelve, and once more began to tell them what things were to befall Him at Jerusalem, but again they perceived not the things that were said. The words matched the occasion, but the apostles' hearts were dull of hearing. The immediate reference in Luke 24: 44 must have brought these several occasions vividly to the recollection of the disciples in that upper room. Thus the whole context of the Lord's mission into the world, the very work which the Father had given him to do, is found in a fulfilment of the things written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms; in other words, in things spoken beforehand by the prophets.

These formal intimations but give in set speech the Lord's habitual attitude to the Old Testament Scriptures even from the very beginning of His public ministry. In the synagogue at Nazareth, after reading with marked significance the appointed portion from Isaiah's prophecy (so that every eye in his audience was fixed upon Him), He added in commentary, "Today hath this Scripture been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4: 21). Throughout His mission upon earth, and especially toward the end of it, the prophetic sayings were constantly on His lips with immediate reference to what was then taking place. Speaking to His disciples of the world's hostility, He said, "This cometh to pass, that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their law, They

hated me without a cause" (John 15: 25). Without minimizing Judas's responsibility, He explains the betrayal as something foreseen in Scripture, saying to the disciples, "I speak not of you all: . . . but that the scripture might be fulfilled, He that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me" (John 13: 18), and again in prayer, "Not one of them perished, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17: 12). On the way to Gethsemane also, foreseeing that He would be associated in death with malefactors, He intimated this to the disciples as something foretold in prophecy, saying, "I say unto you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in me, And he was reckoned with transgressors" (Luke 22: 37). Later, at His arrest, when Peter had drawn his sword and struck off the servant's ear, the Lord said to him, "Put up again thy sword into his place . . . Thinkest thou that I cannot now beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" and added in solemn remonstrance, "How then should the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?" (Matt. 26: 52-54).

In death his last thoughts were for the fulfilment of the prophetic Word. He not only discerned God's will in things that transpired, as written aforetime, but He Himself so acted that not one prediction concerning Him should fall to the ground. His perfect prescience, on the way to the cross, of all things that should befall Him (John 18: 4) was matched in His last hour by an equal realization that all things were now accomplished—all things save one—and with scrupulous care that that one remaining word should not fail, He took action to effect its fulfilment. We read:

"After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst" (John 19: 28).

For it had been written, "In my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psa. 69: 21). This done, He cried with a loud voice, "It is finished," bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.

O perfect life of love!
All, all is finished now,
All that He left His throne above
To do for us below.

No work is left undone
Of all the Father willed;
His toils and sorrows, one by one
The Scripture have fulfilled.

In all this we can see how large a place in the thoughts of the Lord was held by the prophetic Scriptures in their strict sense as prediction of things to come. Need we wonder that they should

likewise have become a salient feature in the Gospel witness borne by the apostles and by their successors in the primitive Church!

If it be asked why prophecy and history should have been linked in this way it may be suggested that in no other fashion could they have become so mutually corroborative. The subsequent fulfilment in history of prophecy gives the latter peculiar authority as having been spoken from God. That events in history should have been so minutely foretold centuries before they transpired invests them with more than ordinary significance. Coincidence of prediction and event points to a Divine ordering.

The Lord Jesus adopted this same method of speech and fulfilment in confirming the faith of His disciples. "These things have I spoken unto you," He said, "that, when their hour is come, ye may remember them, how that I told you" (John 16: 4). At first, as we have already seen, the disciples were slow to recall the Lord's teaching, but the conditions under which it would become effective in their minds are described in the following passages:

"When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spake this; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said" (John 2: 22).

"These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him" (John 12: 16).

"The Comforter . . . he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14: 26).

"Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

"Saying that the Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

"And they remembered his words" (Luke 24: 6-8).

"And I remembered the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 11: 16).

This illumination by the Holy Spirit made real and actual in the minds of the apostles words spoken prophetically either in Old Testament Scripture or by the Lord Himself, and thus powerfully confirmed that events of which they had been eyewitnesses, and which conformed to these predictive oracles, had indeed been pre-ordained of God.

A complete list of these "recollections of Scripture" would show how important this process was in the pattern of apostolic

thinking, and there must also be numerous unrecorded instances. Take but a few of those we have, as, for example, John's observations on the fulfilment of the Lord's own predictions:

"That the word might be fulfilled which he spake, Of those whom thou hast given me I have lost not one" (John 18: 9).

"But this he said, signifying by what manner of death he should die" (John 12: 33).

We have also the comments of Matthew, frequent throughout his Gospel, when he says in these or similar words, "Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying . . ." (Matt. 1: 22). John also, and Mark, advert to the place that prophecy has in accounting for the things that took place with regard to Christ.

The distribution of the Lord's garments among His executioners is seen as a significant action, interpretative of prophecy.

"They said therefore one to another, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did" (John 19: 24).

And of the piercing of the Lord's side by the spear of the Roman soldier, John comments:

"These things came to pass, that the scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.

"And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced" (John 19: 36-37).

These are not chance remarks adorning the narrative, but the expression of an abiding and profound conviction, which entered into their whole religious thought and feeling and gave colour to their confession of faith.

The apostles, in their public preaching too, set forth the message in the context of Old Testament prophecy. Indeed, if their extant sermons be carefully read they will be seen to consist of little else than the exposition of particular prophecies spoken aforetime to the fathers but now fulfilled in Christ. Space does not allow a full enumeration of examples from these and from Paul's addresses, or of noting frequent allusions in the epistolary writings of the New Testament. Peter's early preaching, and certain notable sayings from his epistles, may be taken as characteristic of the whole. They will certainly show that the note of prediction in Old Testament prophecy was a key-position in the apostolic defence of the Gospel.

Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost and those immediately thereafter reflect the feeling of the early church in this matter.

That it should have been given so prominent a place in their public testimony before adverse witnesses (who, moreover, were themselves skilled in the letter of Scripture) but points the argument.

"This is that which hath been spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall be in the last days, saith God, I will pour forth of my Spirit upon all flesh" (Acts 2: 16-17).

"David saith concerning him, I beheld the Lord always before my face . . . because thou wilt not leave my soul in hades, neither wilt thou give thy Holy One to see corruption . . . he foreseeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ" (Acts 2: 25-27, 31).

"David ascended not into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right" (Acts 2: 34).

"For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off" (Acts 2: 39; vide Isa. 57: 19; Eph. 2: 17).

"But the things, which God foreshewed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he thus fulfilled" (Acts 3: 18).

". . . all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which have been since the world began.

"Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me" (Acts 3: 21-22).

"Yea and all the prophets from Samuel and them that followed after, as many as have spoken, they also told of these days" (Acts 3: 24).

"He is the stone which was set at nought of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner" (Acts 4: 11, quoting Psa. 118: 22; cf. Matt. 21: 42).

"Who by the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of thy servant David thy servant, didst say, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things?" (Acts 4: 25).

Reference so habitually sustained cannot be accounted for on any other ground than that, in the mind of the apostles, prediction and event were intentionally related one to the other. Thus and thus it was written; thus and thus it took place. The co-ordinating link is the common witness of the Holy Spirit in both, first testifying beforehand what was to be, and later through the apostles confirming the report of its fulfilment. In a sustained utterance, full of overtones of thought and meaning, Peter writes concerning "the prophets . . . who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what time, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto,

when it testified *beforehand* the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them . . . unto you did they minister these things, which *now* have been announced unto you through them that preached the gospel unto you by the Holy Ghost sent forth from heaven" (I Pet. 1: 10-12). This passage is a focus-point, but throughout both his epistles Peter's primary desire in writing is that his readers "should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets" (II Pet. 3: 1-2).

The rank and file, too, of early preachers found the argument from prophecy a powerful weapon in their spiritual armoury. When Philip the evangelist met the treasurer of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, and found him engaged in reading the prophet Isaiah, he immediately began from this Scripture and preached unto him Jesus (Acts 8: 35). Isaiah, chapter 53, has a long history of Christian interpretation from apostolic times onward, and certainly the note of prediction has been the hinge upon which that interpretation has turned, opening the door of salvation to thousands.

To the early disciples the advent of Christ was the beginning of an era of time when old things had passed away in fulfilment and all things had become new. This new age was felt to be continued after the ascension and enthronement of the Lord Jesus, in that His session at the right hand of God and the consequent descent of the Holy Spirit were held to have created a new fellowship between God's people. The Messianic age spoken of by the prophets had been inaugurated. Yet just as the enthronement of Christ as foretold in Psa. 110, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool," presupposes that enemies remained unsubdued though potentially defeated, so the victory of the early church over the world was one of faith rather than of something actually seen as yet by natural eyes. Cf. Heb. 2: 8-9. But Christ's session at the right hand of God and His coming in the clouds of heaven were, possibly because of His own words as recorded in Matt. 26: 64, thought of as moments in one Divine event. Consequently, the coming of the Lord in glory held a very immediate place in the thoughts of the early church, and rightly so. To them it was the inevitable corollary of the Ascension, and had been confirmed as such by angelic testimony. "This Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven" (Acts 1: 11).

The long-promised new age was now in being, and though it still awaited its full outward manifestation, the blessings belonging to it were now the possession of all believers. Salvation was an accomplished fact. The power of sin had been broken. Death had been overcome. The good news, as foretold by the

prophets in the Holy Scriptures (Rom. 1: 1-2), was now being preached throughout the whole world. It was by the scriptures of these same prophets that, according to St. Paul, the mystery kept secret since the world began was now being made manifest (Rom. 16: 25-26).

In seeking to interpret this new order the apostles, including St. Paul, made constant reference to the predictions of Old Testament prophecy, so that, while admittedly the New Testament revelation concerning the Church has features which are unique and are not discoverable in the Old Testament, it is against the plain sense of Scripture to say that, because the Church is spoken of as a "mystery," it cannot have been referred to in any way in Old Testament prophecy, though it must be conceded that, as with Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ, they could not have been understood as such until they were realized in fulfilment. In *that* sense truth concerning the church was hid from generations and ages, but it must also be remembered that it is by these same Old Testament Scriptures that Peter and Paul and James sought to interpret matters strictly relative to church order and fellowship. In considering these things we do well to recollect that *positive* affirmations on any matter are usually justified, but that *negative* ones are not infrequently the result of inductive reasoning and do not give sufficient attention to *all* the evidence.

Consider, therefore, what the New Testament has to tell us on this point. Whatever other levels of meaning Joel 2: 28-32 may have (and this is an open question among theologians) Peter unequivocally relates Joel's prophecy with what took place on the day of Pentecost, and says, "This is that." But there are other quotations in the Acts, and elsewhere, which have undoubted relevance to the new order, in which the Church has so central a place, particularly regarding the status of Gentile believers in that fellowship into which it introduced both Jew and Gentile. Moreover, when we find the apostle Paul using the same prophecy in precisely the same context of events, and in that very chapter in which he unfolds the unique constitution of the Church, namely Ephesians 2, we cannot but feel that here is something with an important bearing on the nature and fellowship of the Church. The passage in Isaiah reads:

"Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith the Lord" (Isa. 57: 19).

In passing it may be noted that verse 21 of the same chapter, "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked," points back to this same verse. A parallel prophecy in Zechariah, following immediately upon the familiar Messianic announcement begin-

ning, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee," declares, "He shall speak peace unto the nations: and his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth" (Zech. 9: 10).

In the prophecy itself the preaching of peace is first addressed to those that are "far off," as of something wonderful and unique. But when Peter adapts the verse in his great appeal to Israel at Pentecost, it is the latter part of it that he stresses, saying, "For to you is the promise, and to your children" (glancing also in the direction of Joel's prophecy), but is careful to add, "And to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him" (Acts 2: 39). Again, when preaching to Cornelius and his household, Peter reverts to this favourite text in allusive manner, and after speaking about "the word which God sent unto the children of Israel, preaching good tidings of peace by Jesus Christ," he boldly declares, "He is Lord of all" (Acts 10: 36). The climax of his thought is reached when he concludes, "To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name everyone (far off or near) that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins." What compelling conviction is in that word "everyone."

The recurrent terms "far off" and "nigh" in Ephesians 2 point to a similar preoccupation in the mind of Paul with this Old Testament prophecy. He says to us in broad summary, "Gentile believers, once far off, are now made nigh. Christ is our peace. He came and preached peace (as was written aforetime in Isaiah) to you which were far off, and to them that were nigh." Yet in his handling of the text there is a subtle difference from that of Peter. Peter, though uniting both in common fellowship, preserves the distinction between those "far off" and those "nigh." Paul abolishes all distinctions and speaks of both becoming "one new man."

This is Paul's contribution to the New Testament doctrine of the Church, made known to him by revelation (Eph. 3: 3). That those promises which in a peculiar way had been the exclusive possession of the Jew and which hitherto could only be enjoyed by Gentiles through their becoming proselytes, were now possessed by both in equal right (or should one rather say, "in equal grace"?). In Old Testament times the Gentile was not excluded from blessing, but was at a disadvantage in his status: now Jew and Gentile share alike on an equal footing. Believing Gentiles are "fellow citizens with the saints" and "of the household of God" (Eph. 2: 19). In Christ "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Sythian, bondman,

freeman" (Col. 3: 11). This is the "mystery" of which Paul speaks in Eph. 3: 4-5, which lay hid in God from former ages—as the next verse clearly shows: "the mystery . . . that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the Gospel." The fact of the Church had been made known before Paul (Matt. 16: 18), and indeed was in existence and known as such before Paul's conversion: for did he not in his former days "persecute the church" (I Cor. 15: 19)? But that the Gentiles should have the place in it that they did was reserved to Paul's ministry and apostleship: he was made "the apostle of the Gentiles." Now while this was a special revelation made to him of something hitherto kept secret, it is notable that, once having been made known, Paul should have found support for it in the Old Testament, and, as we have seen, set it forth in the very words of Old Testament prophecy. This fact, however, by no means invalidates the unique position and calling of the Church, but sets it in a right relation to God's whole purpose in Christ. Nor does it render invalid the fulfilment of Old Testament promises concerning blessing for the earth as part of God's creation.

It may also be noted that when Paul addressed the elders of the church at Ephesus and spoke of "the church of God which he purchased" (Acts 20: 28), he is quoting the language of Psa. 74: 2, which reads, "Thy congregation (*synagogue*: Septuagint) which thou hast purchased," thus equating in some sense the Christian congregation with that of the ancient synagogue. This citation, incidentally, may account why the words "by his own blood" (the context here of which has long puzzled commentators) should have been added (with the analogy of the Paschal lamb in view) by the richness of Paul's allusive mind, and thus led to a certain looseness of grammatic construction: but other explanations are possible.

Peter's mention, too, of the people of God in this new order is significant. They are "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (I Pet. 2: 9)—terms taken from the privileged position held by the old Israel. In describing their present status he quotes the prophecy of Hosea, "Which in time past were no people, but are now the people of God" (I Peter 2: 10 with Hosea 2: 23), a passage also used by Paul in Rom. 9: 25. Even if Peter looked on his readers as the natural inheritors of the blessings of the chosen people, it is quite incredible that he should think of them as a body of believers outside the Church. So that the free use by the apostles of Old Testament prophecy to describe conditions now found only among true members of Christ shows an attitude of mind—and

manner of thinking—that links the Church with God's earlier workings in Israel.

The sub-apostolic Fathers, too, used fulfilled prophecy to convince unbelievers of the truth of the Gospel, not only in formal defence of the Christians by considered "Apologies" addressed to the Emperor, but also in disputations in the marketplace and in other seats of academic or communal gathering. Justin Martyr's "Dialogue with Trypho," even though cast in a literary convention of the time, provides a picture of what must often have taken place in fact. That Justin himself should have grounded his reasoning on this basis, the fulfilment in Christ of Old Testament prophecy, is not surprising when we listen to the story of his conversion. Meeting with "a certain old man, by no means contemptible in appearance, exhibiting meek and venerable manners" and subsequently debating with him after the Socratic model on the true nature of religious knowledge, Justin was struck with the concluding words of his venerable protagonist. They were these:

"There existed, long before this time, certain men more ancient than all those who are esteemed philosophers, both righteous and beloved of God, who spoke by the Divine Spirit, and foretold events which would take place, and which are now taking place. They are called prophets. These alone both saw and announced the truth to men, neither reverencing nor fearing any man, not influenced by a desire for glory, but speaking those things alone which they saw and which they heard, being filled with the Holy Spirit. Their writings are still extant, and he who has read them is very much helped in his knowledge of the beginning and end of things, and of those matters which the philosopher ought to know, provided he has believed them. For they did not use demonstration in their treatises, seeing that they were witnesses to the truth above all demonstration, and worthy of belief; and those events which have happened, and those which are happening, compel you to assent to the utterances made by them, although, indeed, they were entitled to credit on account of the miracles which they performed, since they both glorified the Creator, the God and Father of all things, and proclaimed His Son, the Christ (sent) by Him."

Left alone, Justin felt his soul kindled as with a flame, and in his "Dialogue with Trypho" he has given us an account of the experience thus:

"Straightway a flame was kindled in my soul: and a love of the prophets, and of those men who are friends of Christ, possessed me; and whilst revolving his words in my mind,

I found this philosophy alone to be safe and profitable. Thus, and for this reason, I am a philosopher. Moreover, I would wish that all, making a resolution similar to my own, do not keep themselves away from the words of the Saviour. For they possess a terrible power in themselves and are sufficient to inspire those who turn aside from the path of rectitude with awe; whilst the sweetest rest is afforded those who make a diligent practice of them. If, then, you have any concern for yourself, and if you are eagerly looking for salvation, if you believe in God, you may—since you are not indifferent to the matter—become acquainted with the Christ of God, and, after being initiated, live a happy life."

In the appeal to prophecy Justin not only instances predictions regarding Christ, but also in a marked degree notices those prophecies which speak of Jewish obduracy against Christ and of the widespread response of the Gentiles to the Gospel. The early persecutions, and the patience of the Christians under them, are seen as fulfilling Scripture and also the predictions made by the Lord Himself when on earth with His disciples (John 16: 4). This, of course, just follows the pattern already traced in apostolic times.

Though some of the arguments used in these polemical writings of the Fathers, and some of the instances given of prophetic fulfilment, may appear strained to modern ears, the general principle supporting them was amply justified. The instinct was sound, even if here and there it was misapplied, and it is certainly more prudent and worthy of enlightened judgment to accept the general position taken and overlook incidental overstatements than to abandon the broad proposition because of occasional defective reasoning. Enthusiasm occasionally outruns discretion, but does not necessarily invalidate the truth contended for. Even Socrates was conscious of this, and upon a certain occasion remarked, "If this is not true, something of the kind is." No one would contend that everything in the Patristic writings is sound Biblical theology, but in their emphasis upon fulfilled prophecy as a proof of the truth of the Gospel they were following a clear precedent from Scripture itself.

The argument from prophecy, once, as we have seen, a main buttress in Christian apologetic, has in our day become to many a dead letter. This, we suspect, springs from the same root that makes men unwilling to accept the supernatural, or, where facts are stubborn, to account for them wholly on naturalistic grounds. But because a particular mode of argument happens to be out of favour at the moment, that is no reason for writing it off as an obsolete defence of Divine truth. We cannot dismiss the

evidential force of prophecy without rejecting the whole tenor of Scripture and the explicit teachings of the Lord Jesus and His commissioned apostles. What was central to them cannot be peripheral to us, much less outside the circumference of our belief.

IX

THE MESSIANIC NOTE IN OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

THROUGHOUT THE PROPHETIC WRITINGS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT occur certain passages which arrest attention by reason of their gnomic form or their enigmatic overtones of meaning: these have by common consent been termed "Messianic." They have heightened significance of thought and feeling, and are felt to propound some Divine mystery or paradox. Even making due allowance for poetic hyperbole such passages not infrequently strike the reader as unexpected breakings-in from another and higher level of thought. The language may even be puzzling in its original context, and while applicable in a general way to some contemporary situation appears to require a larger frame for full extension of meaning.

The early Fathers were prone to read such esoteric elements into Scripture as a whole, seeking thus (as they saw it) a spiritual meaning beneath the natural sense and in many instances confounding the plain sense of what was written. But valid Messianic prophecy, even when embedded in the mass of general prophecy, requires neither the surrender of natural meaning, nor distorted interpretation, to give it force. None the less its very language contains a riddle or wonder inseparable from the transcendency of ultimate spiritual truth. The substance of these prophecies, too, deals with modes of being and matters foreign to experiential knowledge, and therefore is incapable of expression in normal speech. It can take form only in paradox.

At first sight, however, some of these Messianic prophecies appear to be quite simple in expression, but closer examination of what they say produces a dilemma only to be resolved in Christ. In Him alone may their opposing elements be reconciled. Moreover, when these cryptic prophecies are fully considered they will be seen to concentrate upon those enduring fundamental truths, grasped only by faith, upon which rests the whole fabric of the Christian Gospel. In other words, they contain the "stumbling-blocks" of which St. Paul speaks (I Cor. 1: 23; 2: 14), the stone

of offence in the path of natural reason in its search after truth, of which St. Peter also treats when he writes concerning them which "stumble at the word, being disobedient" (I Pet. 2: 8).

The native Titanism of the human mind, in its unwillingness to accept the limitations of conceptual knowledge, finds place as much in theological discussion as in the vaunting claims of natural science. That there are matters too high for us seems difficult to accept without question, though most of us are willing to admit on grounds of self-evident fact that there is very much that we do not know. In the plain words of Scripture we may come to confess, "I have uttered that I understand not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. . . . Now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42: 3-6).

The great truths of Divine revelation crystallize but slowly in our minds, so unfamiliar are they to our human notion of things. "My thoughts are not your thoughts . . . saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa. 55: 8-9). It is not surprising, therefore, that when God's crowning word to man was to be spoken some preparatory instruction should have been necessary if it was not to pass over man's head unconsidered and unrecognized. The writer was once accosted by an agnostic with this question, "If God is, as you say, love, why did He not send Christ into the world immediately Adam fell, and so save the race from its long history of suffering and death?" The question was unusual, and called for an unusual answer, which was, "If I were to hand you a book written in Chinese, could you read it?"

In the very necessity of things the grammar of redemption had to be taught to man before he was fitted to receive the full revelation of God's love in Christ. First the alphabet, then word-formation, followed in turn by elementary grammar and syntax, and finally the written word. No stage may be safely disregarded, and if we now can read and absorb without consciously thinking of the grammatical relation of word to word, or of the formal values of sign or symbol, it is only because at some earlier stage in our education we absorbed their meaning and relevance. In some such way the Old Testament stands in relation to God's self-revelation in Christ. The full impact upon human sensibility of the coming of Christ, if it had not been preceded by preparatory intimations, would have been as baffling as putting a book written in Chinese into the hands of an Eskimo.

The earlier Messianic prophecies are often mysterious in form,

and it is only in the light of later and progressive revelations that their bearing can be understood: yet they form the substratum of later revelations. The Messianic note in prophecy rises from less to more, from the enigmatic to the more manifest, though each is appropriate to the stage at which it is given. Considered thus we can readily see the validity of referring many obscure Old Testament passages to Christ, even though they were uttered at first in response to some quite natural contemporary situation. The Servant songs of Isaiah, for example, the context of which is so warm a matter of debate, are surely to be interpreted in this way. However truly these songs may be applied in a relative sense to Israel, or to the prophet himself, that they are veritable prophecies concerning Christ is a truer and more adequate interpretation of them. Not only does it correspond to a deep instinct of Christian belief, but it has the warrant of the New Testament, in which they are freely applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, both by Himself and by His disciples. Their real value, therefore, was that of preparing the people for One Who was to come, even the Christ.

The broad analogy of Biblical usage sanctions our finding many unsuspected references to Christ in the Old Testament that are not, except in an exceedingly allusive fashion, mentioned in the New. The writings of the early Fathers are full of such references in support of the Christian apologetic, and while today we may look upon many of them with a doubtful eye, they represent a sound instinct. We are upon safer ground if we adhere to those Old Testament prophecies which have a plain New Testament warrant as being in the strictest and most technical sense "Messianic." Five such leading Messianic prophecies may here be considered and the common element in them determined.

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isa. 7: 14. Quoted Matt. 1: 23).

"But thou, Beth-lehem Ephrathah, which are little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose going forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5: 2. Quoted Matt. 2: 6).

"Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption" (Psa. 16: 10. Quoted Acts 2: 31; 13: 35).

"The LORD saith unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool" (Psa. 110: 1. Quoted Matt. 22: 4; Acts 2: 34).

"The stone which the builders rejected is become the head

of the corner" (Psa. 118: 22. Quoted Matt. 21: 42; Mark 12: 10; Luke 20: 17; Eph. 2: 20; Acts 4: 11; I Pet. 2: 7).

The words of Isa. 7: 14 are considered chiefly as a prediction of the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. Important as this interpretation is, it should not be allowed to obscure the equally important and intended contrast between One "born of a woman" (evidently a synonym for frail mortal man. Cf. Job 14: 1; Matt. 11: 11; Gal. 4: 4) and One who is indeed Emmanuel, God with us. Job, in the light of human experience, could ask, "What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of woman, that he should be righteous?" (Job 15: 14). Yet here is One, born of a virgin, of whom it is said that He is God found in fashion as a man, dwelling among men. When first uttered, the prophecy must have seemed mysterious (as indeed it still does to unbelieving ears) and yet have startled "with a wild surmise," a paradox too difficult to understand until Christ came. It therefore bears the mark of Messianic prophecy. That the prophecy had an immediate reference to the future devastation of Judah consequent upon Ahaz's unbelief (the presence of the sign-child in a devastated land being proleptic of the conditions under which the Virgin's Child would be born and grow up) need not blind us to its inherent Messianic allusion. The naming of the child in Isaiah chapter 7 is correlated in St. Matthew's mind with the supernatural naming of Mary's son, and so links the name JESUS with that of Emmanuel. Thus this remarkable prophecy epitomizes in gnomic form an enigma of Divine revelation, a fundamental Gospel truth enshrined also in the words of the Athanasian Creed, "Perfect God, and perfect Man . . . Who although he be God and Man: yet is he not two, but one Christ."

Again, consider the passage from Micah, chapter 5. Superficially, this reads like a simple announcement beforehand, of where Christ was to be born, but underneath the statement lies an astonishing juxtaposition of opposites. Micah, after denouncing the sin of Israel and Judah, and predicting the judgments that would overwhelm Samaria and Judah, goes on to promise eventual restoration. This is to come out of Beth-lehem Ephrathah. But when we turn to the records of the return from the Captivity we find that of the children of Bethlehem only one hundred and twenty-three souls returned (Ezra 2: 21). The population had indeed been depleted, as later it again was when Christ was born and Herod destroyed all the male children under two years old, so that the prophecy of Jeremiah found yet another fulfilment than it had received at the time of the Captivity, "Rachel weeping for her children; she refuseth to be comforted"

(Jer. 31: 15. Quoted Matt. 2: 17-18). For Rachel, too, died near this spot, and in giving birth to Benjamin called his name Benoni, which means, Son of my sorrow. So that there is a succession of mourning and lamentation connected traditionally with this village, making it an emblem of thwarted hopes and diminished greatness.

It was from this place, too, that David rose to be ruler in Israel, and he seems never to have forgotten the lowly circumstances out of which he was raised. Yet of David could it not be said that his "goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Here again, then, is a Divine mystery, an unexpected coming forth from humble and obscure circumstances of a Governor whose antecedents are without beginning. Not only is there a paradox, as in Isa. 7: 14, of One who is both God and man, but a paradox between the temporal and the eternal, between natural weakness and supernatural goings-forth. Where other than in Christ is this dilemma resolved? The cross of Christ is at one and the same time foolishness and weakness to the natural man but to all who believe, the power of God and the wisdom of God (I Cor. 1: 17-25). The antinomy is preserved in Messianic prophecy.

Yet again, take that other Scripture, Psalm 16: 10, where David, speaking by the Spirit, says, "Thou wilt not leave my soul to Sheol; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." A godly Jew, reading this, must have felt an acute problem. In David's mind holiness and incorruption were inseparable. He himself had been anointed king over God's people, and was, in this sense, God's holy one, even as also were the priests. Yet in the event David died and saw corruption, as St. Peter so cogently observes in his address at Pentecost. So that this prophecy could not wholly, or even primarily, have referred to David himself, though as a human type of the Messiah it was fitting that he should utter these words.¹ "But he whom God raised from the dead saw no corruption," continues Peter, and therefore we may say of the Lord Jesus Christ that He is, in the strictest and most real sense, God's Holy One. He has been declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1: 4). The mystery of the passage, which is not diminished by its solution in Christ, lies in the fact that the One so spoken of had suffered death, and therefore it seemed inevitable that His claim to Divine holiness would be rendered invalid by His seeing

¹ Since to David himself "seeing corruption" was practically synonymous with "die," the original reference was doubtless to David's own hope of preservation in life, but that his faith was so worded under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit as to contain a fuller meaning (only ascertainable after fulfilment) is clear from Acts 2: 31 and 13: 15.

corruption. The prophecy is therefore genuinely Messianic, and points to a central element in our Christian faith, the death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

No other than He is, in this sense, holy, even as no other than He, because of intrinsic sanctity, has been raised from the dead. *Our* hope of resurrection, as of all the faithful, rests on Him. Incidentally, this rules out the possibility of even Mary, His mother, because of personal holiness, experiencing incorruption. While the principle invoked may be sound, that holiness and incorruption go hand in hand, the application to Mary has no warrant in Holy Scripture. Mary is indeed called "blessed," and this Divine *congratulation* is echoed by later generations, but nowhere is there any hint whatsoever of a consequent "assumption" to heaven. Rather does Scripture speak of "that which is to be born (of thee) shall be called holy"; and Mary herself, concerning God her Saviour, that "holy is His name." Even her blessedness is ranked below that of those who "hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11: 28).

The numerous references in the New Testament to Psa 110: 1 mark its importance as a corner-stone of Messianic prophecy. Jewish as well as Christian belief held it to be so. Disputing with the Pharisees the Lord could confidently appeal to this Scripture as traditionally Messianic. As such it could not be controverted or set aside. Hanging His argument upon the prefatory words of the verse, He fastens at once upon the characteristic enigma within the prophecy. "The LORD said unto my lord." Here "the LORD" is the supreme Ruler of all, Lord of heaven and earth, whose absolute and Divine authority lies behind the declaration about to be made, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Now to whom is this declaration made? David plainly says that it is "unto my lord," and thus to One to whom even David yields precedence. David, as head of the royal house, was reckoned a patriarch (Acts 2: 29), and from him was to come the Messiah, who therefore was known as "the Son of David." Yet here David himself speaks of this still future descendant as being "my lord." So Christ put the question to the Pharisees, "If David then called him Lord, how is he his son?" (Matt. 22: 45). Priority and succession are predicted of one and the same person: how could this be? Once again, the seeming contradiction is reconciled in the Lord Jesus, who is both "the root and the offspring of David" (Rev. 22: 16). The Pharisees were quite willing to admit that the Christ would be David's Son, but relapsed into sullen silence when a Scripture which implied that He also was David's Lord was quoted to them. It is part of the Christian Gospel that while Jesus Christ "was made of the

seed of David according to the flesh," He also has been "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead" (Rom. 1: 3-4; cf. II Tim. 2: 8).

As Son of David, He is heir to the throne of Israel, but as David's Lord He could say of Himself, "My kingdom is not of this world." When the people would take Him by force and make Him king (but at the same time refused His higher claims), He rejected their homage, thereby showing that the kingdom which He came to establish was something other than that of an earthly monarch, however valid also His claim to the throne of Israel may have been. In the ascension of the Lord Jesus to the right hand of the Father the ancient prophecy reached its true end, finding its fulfilment, not in an earthly theocracy, but in a super-temporal sphere. From thence He will come visibly, to subdue all things to Himself (I Cor. 15: 15-18 with Heb. 2: 8) and to assume the many crowns that are His right.

To those accustomed from other Scriptures to think of Christ solely as David's Son, this Messianic prophecy concerning David's Lord, exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, must have seemed an insoluble problem. When He, whom St. Matthew at the beginning of his Gospel calls the Son of David (Matt. 1: 1), applied to Himself the words of this Psalm, saying, "Henceforth ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power," the high priest of Israel rent his clothes, and cried out, "He hath spoken blasphemy." To faith founded upon the prophetic word, the twofold title presents no obstacle.

Under veiled symbolism the words of Psal. 118: 22-23 predict a striking turn of events,

"The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the corner.

"This is the LORD's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

What more apt form could have been employed to arrest attention, especially when couched, as this is, in the graphic past tense of prophetic vision, as of something "as good as done." All that was needed at the time of delivery to awake search and expectation is here: sufficient also to be accurate description when eventual fulfilment took place. Until then, explicit detail was unnecessary. The prophecy itself is perhaps best understood in line with other Old Testament prophecies employing the same symbolism. Considered together, these form an impressive unity of truth, and illustrate the orderly development of prophetic revelation from age to age.

"(From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel)"
(Gen. 49: 24).

A cryptic parenthesis suited to the still undeveloped purpose of God at the moment of utterance!

"Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone of sure foundation" (Isa. 28: 16).

"And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel" (Isa. 8: 14).

"For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone are seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 3: 9).

The previous verse says that Joshua the high priest and his fellows were "men of wonder" or "signs," so that this prophecy clearly has a symbolic value.

"He shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace, unto it" (Zech. 4: 7).

Interpreting king Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image and the stone cut out without hands, Daniel said:

"Forasmuch as thou sawest that a stone was cut out of the mountains without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king, what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure" (Dan. 2: 45).

This last Scripture should be considered along with Matt. 21: 42-44, where it is linked with Psalm 118: 22 f. and Isa. 8: 14 f.

Throughout these Scriptures run two concurrent threads: first, that the coming Messiah would be rejected by the rulers of Israel; and, secondly, that in spite of this He would become the foundation and cornerstone of a new and spiritual temple, a community of which Israel was the earthly type. Peter, in his epistle, collates these same Scriptures, and gives them this interpretation. In the early period of the Church, when Jewish antagonism to the new faith was a bitter reality, these prophecies had peculiar force, and their prediction of the triumph of Christ took fresh significance from the rapid spread of Christianity among all sorts and conditions of men. In their witness before a hostile world the early Christians found in these twin beliefs a strong support to their faith. In the writings of the early apologists Scripture after Scripture is quoted to show that this course of events had been long foretold by the Hebrew prophets. Even now it is difficult to read such passages as Isa. 8: 14 without perceiving that this mark of national rejection was an indubitable sign by which the true Messiah could be recognized. The search is narrowed down to One notably rejected by the Jewish people, and we cannot

avoid the inference that no one else is so likely to be that Person as Jesus of Nazareth. Of whom else could such passages as the following be fitly spoken?

“A reproach of men, and despised of the people” (Psa. 22: 6).

“Thus saith the Lord . . . , to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth . . . Kings shall see and arise . . .” (Isa. 49: 7).

“He was despised, . . . and we esteemed him not . . . we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted” (Isa. 53: 3-4).

“I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication: and they shall look unto me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son” (Zech. 12: 10).

Even if this be given a contemporary reference, the later language of Revelation 1: 7 shows that it has a fuller reference to Christ. Action prophecies, too, of Messianic types like Joseph and David, rejected by their brethren but exalted by God, point in the same direction.

This dual theme runs throughout all Old Testament prophecy, and gives to such texts as Psa. 118: 22 their arresting form. Echoes of it are found in the antithetic expression so frequently used by Peter when referring to Jesus as the Christ: “Rejected indeed of men, but with God elect” (I Pet. 2: 4); “Whom ye crucified, Whom God raised from the dead” (Acts 4: 10).

It will have been observed that these Messianic prophecies now considered have a contemporary setting in the period when first they were spoken, and that this immediate historical background cannot be ignored in seeking their interpretation: so far from this being so, it almost invariably gives the clue to it. There is thus nothing arbitrary in the way in which these Scriptures are quoted, as if the original historical environment were tacitly set aside or misunderstood. Indeed, a fruitful field of study remains to be opened up by still fuller examination of the historical context in which passages from the Old Testament quoted in the New are found. Valuable work of this kind has already been done in recent studies, but there is still “much land to be possessed.” It is now some time since Westcott, in his commentary *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, noted the historical setting of many of the quotations in chapters 1 and 2 of that Epistle. For example, take these four:

“I will declare thy name unto my brethren,

“In the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise” (Heb. 2: 12 with Psa. 22: 22).

“Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet” (Heb. 2: 8 with Gen. 1: 26; Psa. 8: 6).

“I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son” (Heb. 1: 5 with II Sam. 7: 14).

“Behold, I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb. 2: 13 with Isa. 8: 18).

These allude to significant moments in history or in personal experience which mark the Messianic movement within them, and look forward to their culmination in Christ. Fresh meaning is given to David’s deliverance from persecution, Adam’s installation into his high estate, Solomon under the protection of God, and Isaiah with his sign-children standing in the midst of the nation. “What these indicate,” to quote Westcott, “Christ completely fulfilled.” Prophecy is thus linked with history, and both with God.

Peter’s predilection for quoting Old Testament prophecy, already alluded to, is by no means peculiar to himself. Paul, too, grounds his faith in “all things which are according to the law, and which are written in the prophets” (Acts 24: 14), and sums up his preaching as consisting of “nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26: 22-23). Speaking thus before king Agrippa he seizes upon an issue that would commit his hearer to faith in Christ, saying, “King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.” Agrippa well knew to what this was leading, and answered lightly but indulgently, “A little more of this, and you’ll have me a Christian.” To him a suffering Christ was both a stumbling-block and foolishness, and his present power and position made Christ’s triumph something unreal. Paul, on the contrary, with Peter and the other apostles, found in the writings of the prophets both “the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow.”

This intimate association of the word of prophecy with the death of Christ takes on added force when we consider that the cross of Christ derives no virtue from accidents of time or circumstances but is wholly conditioned by what Christ is in His own Person. This remarkable fact has been largely overlooked in theological debate, and therefore requires fuller consideration at this point. It is implicit in the language of Hebrews 1: 3 (A.V.), where the words occur, “when he had by himself purged our sins.” Although the words “by Himself” do not appear in certain of the more ancient manuscripts, and therefore are not found in the Revised Version, their meaning is clearly implicit

in the context. This casts a glance at the way in which His essential Person enters into and gives value to His great work of making reconciliation for sins. "By Himself" therefore means that the sacrifice of Christ draws its virtue from what He is in His own Person, and not from extrinsic circumstances. Bengel remarks, "without the external Levitical instrumentality or covenant." Being Who and What He is—Heir of all things, the brightness of God's glory, the express image of His substance, the Creator and Upholder of the universe—He, through His own instrumentality, made purification of sins.

While the words "by Himself" infer that He *alone* accomplished the work, they more strictly mean that it was through His own agency that all was done. Purification of sins was made "through, or by means of, Himself." There is a parallel use in Hebrews 9: 12 where "obtained (eternal redemption)," in the middle voice, indicates "obtained through Himself or by His own resources." The contrast, of course, is to the ministrations of the Levitical high priest on the great day of atonement (Lev. 16), who entered into the Holiest "by the blood of bulls and of goats," (that is, "with blood not his own" (Heb. 9: 25)), whereas Christ entered into heaven itself "through His own blood" (Heb. 9: 12).

The sacrifice of Christ, though prefigured in those of the old Economy, is explicitly said not to have a legal, that is, a *Levitical* character, but to belong to another order, one entirely its own. The epistle to the Hebrew deals with two distinct orders of sacrifice: the Levitical, offered "by the law" (Heb. 10: 8); and that of Christ, grounded in "the will of God" (Heb. 10: 7 *et seq.*). For this read carefully Hebrews 10: 5-10, the argument of which is based on the words of Psalm 40: 6.

"Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.

"Then said I, Lo, I am come; in the roll of the book it is written of (*margin*: prescribed to) me:

"I delight to do thy will, O my God."

Deeds take character from the principles under which they are wrought. The Levitical sacrifices shared all the weakness and inefficiency of the system under which they were offered. "The law made nothing perfect" (Heb. 7: 19). That offered by Christ, because it came directly out of the will of God (disclosed "in the roll of the book"), has eternal and abiding efficacy.

The narrative of the Gospel confirms the non-Levitical character of the death of Christ. He suffered, not within the city walls, much less in "holy places made with hands," but "outside the camp" (Heb. 13: 11). Jerusalem symbolized all that the Levitical system stood for: it was the holy city, the place where

God has set His Name, and was associated with the temple and its priesthood. From that city Christ was led forth to be crucified. There was no place for Him in the sacred precincts. From the Levitical, the ritualistic point of view, the death on the cross was shorn of all holy associations: no priest presided over the sacrifice—except to mock and deride; no sacerdotal rites were observed, prescribed by Levitical rubric; no pomp of temple worship accompanied the death of the Victim. He died a felon's death, and by a mode shameful in Jewish eyes, the death of the cross, as if He were a Gentile malefactor. Nothing could have been more removed from priestly or religious associations. It was as if in His death He would borrow no glory or majesty from processional pomp or ceremonial circumstance but let the stark fact of the cross speak for itself.

Yet though His cross owes nothing to legal instrumentality, there is that (and here indeed is a remarkable circumstance) which invests it with peculiar significance, and singles it out as being no ordinary death. As we consider that cross we are immediately made conscious that things have happened as they did (thus and thus), not fortuitously but according to some hidden Divine purpose, for Scripture after Scripture leaps unbidden to our minds, and we see a detailed correspondence between the word of prophecy and the manner of His death.

He is numbered with the transgressors, they pierce His hands and His feet, they part His garments among them and cast lots for His vesture, in His thirst they give Him vinegar to drink, His side is pierced, He makes intercession for the transgressors, not a bone of Him is broken. His words on the way to and upon the cross re-echo the language of Scripture: "Smite the Shepherd and the sheep will be scattered," "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?," "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit." In sacrifices offered under the law, though attended with due ritual, God had found no pleasure, and it was because of this that the spirit of Christ, speaking through David, testified, "Then said I, Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God," interjecting the significant words, "In the roll of the book it is written of me," thus indicating where that will found expression. The fact that it was according to the Scriptures that Christ died for our sins, and that He rose again, is formal proof that His death comes out of the will of God. Behind the fact is the prophecy, and behind the prophecy, GOD. In this remarkable fashion, then, the cross bears its own certification as a Divine work.

Messianic prophecy is not exhausted by these more explicit examples, for throughout the whole of the Old Testament are passages whose reference clearly lies beyond the time then

present, and centre upon a future Saviour-King, whose coming would bear alike the mark of utter humiliation and of Divine triumph. In broad outline they all testify "the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow" (I Pet. 1: 11), thus again accentuating the twofold mystery of His coming. We may note in passing that a literal rendering of Peter's phrase would be "the sufferings *unto* Christ," thereby linking into one harmonious and inclusive whole not only the historical movement leading up to Christ but the prophetic revelation through which that movement was made known to men. In addition there are types and shadows, veiled hints and indications, half-disclosed intimations and significant events that confirm and illustrate the clearer predictions. The cumulative effect of all these is of a broad background of prophecy against which events are taking place. This is something even more convincing to the mind than spectacular fulfilments of single prophecies, however numerous these also may be, and points to an ordered comprehension of things in the mind of Him from whom they proceed.

These "moments" of revelation each contain some enigma of Divine truth, and epitomize in gnomic form supernatural realities that were to find expression in particular historical happenings. When first uttered they must have seemed mysterious, and yet something in them arrested attention and invited inquiry. All revealed truth retains an element of unfathomable mystery as well as of unmistakable disclosure, so that the certainty of faith is mingled with the wonder of worship, and leads to ultimate humility of mind. This is why the rigid dogmatist can never understand why simple believers with a firm hold upon their God sometimes refuse assent to over-simplified formulations of Divine truth, and yet maintain an orthodoxy that stands the shocks of life and is triumphant over death.

Whatever mysteries lie hid in Messianic prophecy are due to the themes that they treat of, which are both supertemporal and supernatural. The Bible speaks of them as "wonders," "miracles," "works of God"—things that can only be expressed through signs or visions or dark sayings. Thus we are led into the knowledge of another and spiritual world where God reigns in higher glory than in this, a world comprehensible only to faith. Christ is the great Sign given to men in order that they may read what otherwise would have been hidden from them for ever. In Him God is manifest in flesh. The incarnate Word is the great expression of the Divine mystery. Of God we read that He is "the King eternal, incorruptible, invisible" (I Tim. 1: 17), that He dwelleth "in light unapproachable; whom no man hath seen, nor can see" (II Tim. 6: 16). Yet we also read that "the only

begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him" (John 1: 18).

The word of prophecy discloses this intervention of God through Christ into the stream of human history. Christ is therefore named "Wonderful" (Isa. 9: 6), as being the great *sign* or *miracle* of God's redemptive activity among men. The angel of the LORD who appeared to Manoah said unto him, "Wherefore askest thou thus after my name, seeing that it is wonderful?"—that is, *secret* (Judges 13: 18)—and in confirmation "the angel did wondrously," ascending up to heaven in the flame of the sacrifice. This then is the element out of which prophecy comes, and that which gives it its mysterious character. To reduce prophecy to rationalistic terms is to rob it of its prime value. Why should it be thought strange that there are levels of thought and life beyond that perceptible by human reason? Or that there is a meaningful value in prophecy which demands that it be taken seriously by all who find themselves confronted with facts in human experience for which reason can give no adequate explanation? The more so since those who have made the venture of faith assure us with one voice that it gives significance and validity to life, that although many problems still remain unresolved these do not affect the inner certainty given by the Word of God.

X

THE UNITY OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

THE UNITY OF OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY IS IN ESSENCE rather than form. We have here no elaborate system formulated with artificial skill, but living flashes of truth coming from a central sun. Yet how much more convincing is this than would have been a mere programmatic outline of coming events. Prophecy as a whole is thus a rich and complex texture of human situations wrought into one pattern by a single organic purpose and held together in a living Person. This is not to say that there are not traces of meticulous and accurate detail within this general prophetic view, but that as a whole Scripture does not present it to us in this fashion. The writings of Daniel, it is true, clearly indicate the existence of a Divinely ordered but not fully disclosed chronological plan. And there are discernible sequences of events in the prophetic calendar of Hebrew festivals which no serious student of Scripture can afford to neglect. For they correspond in some remarkable way with the order of events taken by the New Testament history of redemption. The date

of the Passover, the feast of unleavened bread with its presentation of the wavesheaf on "the morrow after the Sabbath," and the feast of Pentecost concluding the feast of weeks, have chronological parallels in the death and resurrection of Christ, and in the descent of the Holy Spirit too remarkable to be dismissed as pious imagination. And the inference may be legitimately drawn that the whole series of Sabbatic feasts represents in ritual the pattern of some heavenly original that has its final embodiment in Christ.

To acknowledge this, however, is something quite other than to attach specific meanings of our own to every detail of ancient ritual, especially since Scripture uses sparingly this method of handling the types and in general draws only broad moral and spiritual lessons from them. Indeed, it may safely be said that with the types, as with the prophecies, interpretation is surer when confined to instances having a definite Scriptural warrant. Even in such instances there is usually some pointed practical application, prophylactic against the speculative or conjectural. Scripture suggests methods of study which we do well to follow.

A unity of the kind described presupposes an active superintending Mind within and behind the writings, which therefore have coherence and order. This gives them also that something which eludes literary definition and relates them to a living Personality. For as in human literature we can recognize a single mind shining through various modes of writing by one and the selfsame author, so in this Book the spiritual mind perceives one animating impulse and intelligence illuminating the whole range of its prophetic writings. The consistency throughout of law and of personal prevision (already dwelt on in earlier chapters) indicate this essential unity, a common ambience and direction surpassing any that might have come through mere formal arrangement of the material.

This vital element in Old Testament prophecy springs from the constant inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God, the third Person in the blessed Trinity, who in this aspect of His office is termed "the Spirit of Christ." For the flow of prophetic inspiration is attributed throughout Scripture to the Spirit, and also in a particular way is linked with Christ in His incarnation and redemptive work. The resultant unity is implied in such a passage of Scripture as I Peter 1: 10-12, where the testimony of the prophets and that of the early evangelists are alike attributed to the Holy Spirit. The armies may indeed be scattered over a wide front, and it may be difficult to see how troops in one sector are co-ordinated with those in another, but the fact of a Central

Command ensures that one strategy governs the whole. The fulfilment of prophecy must therefore be considered in relation to the scope of its ultimate purpose and not be reduced to a narrow temporal perspective.

When prophecy is thus viewed as the Word of God everything is duly subordinated to the will of the Most High, Who "doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Dan. 4: 35). If it be objected that this is nothing other than pure determinism and fixed fate, and so subversive of moral responsibility, it may be replied that the practical effect of prophecy, rightly understood, has ever been to stimulate consciousness of good and evil, and to promote right action. Warnings and promises link themselves with prediction, as in Jonah's prediction of the fall of Nineveh, which, while in categorical enough terms, must (in view of the sequel) be held to contain an implied condition ("unless it repents"). Jonah himself, though disapproving, was aware of this (Jonah 4:2). Other like prophecies even more explicitly give an "*either or*" as consequent upon obedience or disobedience. Human responsibility thus moves within the circle of God's sovereignty. If, in the interests of human freedom, it be affirmed that man retains the power of personal choice (and this may be freely conceded), is not this also, in degree, determinism? Why then should it be thought out of place that God, whose wisdom and power and love are infinite, should exercise His own will and determine how the course of His own universe should be shaped? "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? . . . Hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. 9: 20-21). It may not be otherwise, yet how that right is exercised also lies within His power, who delights in mercy and whose prerogative is grace to the undeserving. Prophecy, therefore, in this determinative sense also, is the Word of the living God.

The Word of God is more than statement. It is the germinal Seed that produces the event. The original word of creation endures, even until now, in the continuance of the stars in the heavens. God's Word does not weaken and die from its moment of utterance. Rather does it from that point initiate some new activity, which straightway begins to develop in a certain direction, and without interruption continue toward its destined goal. In this final consummation the Word reaches its full measure: only then is its inner power and significance adequately expressed. This self-fulfilment of the Word of God is expressed with poetic elevation and spiritual truth in Isa. 55: 10-11.

“For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater;

“So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

The Word of God is to be thought of as having the creative force of a Divine fiat. We ought not therefore to dissociate the Word from the historical embodiment of its inherent powers. These powers, it is true, may not at first sight be evident, but that the Word of God is vitally active, running to and fro over the face of the earth, and that its utterance sets in motion spiritual forces whose movement may run through centuries, will in the end be seen to be so.

But, it is objected, this creative word is something else than the written word preserved in the Bible. Should it not rather be thought of as the motion of God's will within God's own mind? Before even a page of the Bible was written had not this word gone forth from God's mouth, calling all things into existence? This must be frankly admitted. God's Word, as a term, is indeed frequently used without the Scriptures, as such, being in view. While this is so, it does not inevitably follow that the prophetic word, spoken or written, is not in as valid a sense the living and effectual Word of God. Speech, surely, no less than volition, may utter God's mind. Shall He that formed man's tongue not use it if He will? The language of Isaiah attests with extreme particularity that the word of prophecy is, as the Word of Jehovah, as powerful in its effects as the word by which the worlds were made.

“I am the LORD that maketh all things . . . that stretched forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth.

“That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the council of his messengers,

“THAT SAITH of Jerusalem, She shalt be inhabited, and of the cities of Judah, They shall be built: . . .

“THAT SAITH to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers;

“THAT SAITH of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure:

“Even saying of Jerusalem, She shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid” (Isa. 44: 24-28).

The Word of God, therefore, works creatively in history, and controls the issue of events. Prophecy is a transcript of that

Word: it interprets the past, directs the present, and determines the future.

If prophecy must thus be regarded as the Word of the LORD are we thereby justified in ascribing a like sanctity to the writings of Scripture? Any reply to this question must take account of the claims that the Bible makes for itself on this matter, and also of the impression made upon any unbiased and careful reader of the Book. One thing is certain: that, according to the use and wont of the writers themselves, an appeal to the other Scriptures carried with it an assurance of unquestioned authority; and also that it was the invariable practice of the Lord Jesus, both before and after His resurrection, so to use the Scriptures. Finality of this kind can only come from one Source. For who, save God, can speak with absolute finality on things heavenly and eternal? We cannot escape the fact that the “Thus it is written” of the Bible is equated with the “Thus saith Jehovah” of the prophets; and that both are explicitly identified with Him whose Word spake all things into existence. “He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Psa. 33: 9).

If this be so, there must of necessity be a Divine unity binding all prophecy into one harmonious and self-consistent pattern, and conforming in its general outline to the shape of things taken in the course of human history. This broad design is glimpsed in those lofty prophetic visions given to the prophet Daniel, and to the apostle John in the book of the Revelation, which, though they elude at present our full grasp, create within our minds an immediate impression of grandeur and sublimity suited to a Divine *Weltanschauung*.

Old Testament prophecy and Old Testament history go hand in hand. Each reaches its point of interpretation in Christ, and both are co-ordinated in Him. They develop in unison, the partial and progressive in the one keeping pace with the partial and progressive in the other. Thus the broad cryptic utterances of early prophecy correspond with the basic but undeveloped movements of early Bible history. There is in this a propriety of mood and measure that has something in it of what the Romans called “*mores*,” which includes among other things action and manner appropriate to every occasion and circumstance. When both prophecy and history reach their culmination in Christ, they harmonize in Him with like fitness, and so attain their ultimate and mutual correspondence.

Some important issues spring from these facts. To begin with, had a merely systematic unity been presented to us, a programmatic arrangement of events which any intelligent mind could grasp apart from moral disposition or spiritual character, prophecy

could not have served the purpose for which it was intended, namely, to bring men into sympathy with the mind of God, and to prepare them for faith in Christ. Prophecy addresses, not the rational element in man's nature only, but the whole man, heart and mind, will and intelligence, conscience and active life.

In Christ we have the supreme touchstone whereby the essential values of Old Testament prophecy are brought to the surface. This test applied, all prophecy responds thereto and "comes alive." Christ Himself is the unifying element of prophecy. This being so, apart from faith in Him prophecy is a sealed book. The Jews, because of unbelief, did not understand their own Scriptures, despite indefatigable zeal in studying them. "Ye search the Scriptures," Christ said, "and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me" (John 5: 39-40). Even yet, when Moses is read, the veil is on their hearts. But when they shall turn to the Lord, the veil will be taken away, and their ancient Scriptures will shine out to them with fresh meaning. This is the major significance of Isaiah, chapter 53, which foretells prophetically how Israel, once blinded in unbelief, shall come to recognize in the Lord Jesus their true Messiah. "We in our ignorance and mistaken zeal," they will say, "thought Him an outcast from God, an impostor rightly suffering His deserts, but lo, in these very sufferings He was being wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities." What Rabbinical lore failed to discover, spiritual need and the revelation of Christ to the heart will make clear. Have nominal Christians nothing to learn from this? Valuable though it be, theology is not enough.

The unity of prophecy is therefore something true and real, and its correspondence with the unity of Old Testament history, also something actual and vital, brings it into the centre of total human experience. In some sense it provides the Divine philosophy of history—only, it is not abstract but concrete philosophy. This brings us to the sum of our argument: behind history lies prophecy, and behind prophecy, God.

PART III

GOD

XI

THE FULFILMENT OF THE PLAN

THE GOSPEL STEMS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT. ACCORDING to Heb. 1: 1-2 the same God speaks in both, and does so in continuance of a single objective. "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." In the Gospel we have the full expression of God's Word: Old Testament history is therein evangelically fulfilled, Old Testament prophecy historically realized. True, we style the book containing the message "The New Testament," or, to give the full title, "The New Testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and this presupposes that the Old has been superseded by the New. This supersession, however, is not (like that of the Levitical system with its outward ordinances) one of complete abandonment but of fulfilment. We do not, for instance, now offer animal sacrifices in Divine service, but we *do* still read our Old Testament, which remains a living contemporary witness to the truth of the Gospel.

Hope is basic to the Old Testament. Before Christ, faith rested in promised mercy. Though man had fallen, he was not abandoned to despair. Promise, therefore, is the keynote to the whole book, whether psalm or chronicle, vision or lamentation, statute or prophecy. The ultimate end is salvation. The Old Testament has therefore been called a *Heilsgeschichte*, or history of salvation. Because the subjugation of evil is a necessary condition to this end, the Old Testament has much to say about the Divine judgments, and these have perhaps as a consequence been too exclusively regarded as the grand *raison d'être* of prophecy. Yet the prophets themselves, speaking in the name of the Lord, reveal that judgment is God's "strange work" (Isa. 28: 21), that He delights in mercy, and willeth not the death of any. Again and again, above the thunder of threatened doom rise pleading words of earnest solicitude, "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die?": "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (Isa. 55: 7).

The characteristic attitude of the Old Testament is a stretching out of the hands toward a day to come when the curse of sin would be removed, God's kingdom be established on earth, and God Himself dwell in grace among men. Promise upon promise is given, and these renewed and confirmed time after time, until a great and comforting Messianic hope, extending over centuries and upholding the expectation of succeeding generations, was born in the hearts of God's people. There is in this a magnificence of scale, worthy of Him who inspired it, and matching the universal blessing that it pledges. Though in human reckoning long-delayed, His mercy endureth for ever. God had not left His world. The slow processional march of time, as God develops His dealings with mankind, is made to subserve this ultimate purpose of salvation for the whole world. In the fulness of time Christ came, and the long night, lit only by hope's bright candle, gave way to the shining radiance of the day of salvation. The Dayspring from on high had visited us. The darkness was past, and the true light now shining. Men could say one to another, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

In this sense, therefore, more than in any other, the Old Testament has been fulfilled in the New. Prophecies do not exist in isolation or obscure the grand purpose behind each of them, God's desire to save and bless mankind. Even the prophet Jonah, commissioned to threaten in unrelieved terms God's judgment upon Nineveh, knew something of this when he said, upon God's reversal of doom, "I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? . . . for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repentest thee of the evil." The whole Old Testament is but the grand prolegomena to John 3: 16—"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." So viewed, the Old Testament exhibits a unity of hope and promise, and in a complex diversity of ways, conditioned to the spiritual needs of mankind over an extended range of time, illustrates the largeness and enduring strength of God's mercy.

Salvation is man's ultimate need; not only salvation from the frustrations and disabilities of life, but in an altogether deeper sense, salvation from sin, with all that sin connotes and involves. This being so, only that which reveals such salvation can give satisfaction and meaning to life. Lesser satisfactions may indeed tempt us, and we may rest in them without realizing that we are missing something of first importance, but sooner or later these

lesser lights will flicker out, and if we are left without the true light, we shall find ourselves in utter darkness. The whole discipline of life is meant to force us back upon this fact. The one thing needful is to have our relationship with God restored and to come into the personal experience of His saving grace in Christ. Other things then, without losing their relative values, fall into harmony and proportion, and contribute in their degree to the glory of God.

Salvation comes out of justice, and God's delight in it springs from His own character. The Old Testament bears constant witness to the LORD's hatred of tyranny, and to the fact that He hears the cry of the downtrodden. The great judgments of the Old Testament are connected with the fall of tyrants like Pharaoh and Sennacherib, and of oppressor nations like Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Persia. These outward deliverances of history are so wrought as to reveal God in His saving character, and are taken as symbols of salvation on a higher and spiritual level. For man is under the oppression of sin, and is helpless to save himself. The parallel may be extended to include the attitude of the oppressed, who see in their affliction a Divine judgment upon their own guilt. Groaning after relief from distress, they know it can only come through sin being forgiven. The actual deliverance is the outward token of this. Thus when deliverance comes the people look on it from this angle, and exclaim that "the Lord had passed by the transgression of His people." Yet this forgiveness is not simply an act of amnesty. It takes the total situation into account, exposes the righteous necessities of the case, and by meeting these, achieves salvation. This then is enjoyed as much as an act of justice as of lenience. Mercy and truth unite: righteousness and peace are reconciled.

Sin is borne and forgiven. If God's righteous Servant is able to justify many it is because "He shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53: 11). The deepest conviction of the Christian is that Christ "bore our sins in his body upon the tree" (I Pet. 2: 24). This bearing of sin carries a wealth of meaning, and includes full sympathy and identification with suffering man ("Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows"), strict regard to the requirements of Divine justice, self-sacrifice, ultimate victory over all the consequences of sin, including death, and, most of all, voluntary endurance of whatever penalties sin had brought upon us. Language must here necessarily use the form of symbol, for the reality transcends all speech, but this does not mean that the language so used is not valid, or that it does not convey something that is real to the human soul. Grasping at something glimpsed in its essence language is enriched by symbol, not impoverished.

So in seeking to proclaim the mystery of the atonement the Christian preacher rightly uses the language of the market-place, the vocabulary of ancient ceremonial, and metaphors drawn from the prison house, to express what in itself is transcendental truth, too high for human utterance.

Salvation, though in its initial experience individual, leads to a sense of communal blessing. This feeling of spiritual solidarity with God's people of all times and of all places, a strong consciousness of universality surmounting all that is merely local in time and place, is one of the deepest instincts of Christian experience, and is confirmed in the general implications of Biblical thought. The godly Israelite of olden time fulfilled his service toward God within the chosen community. The constant language of his heart was, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of the Lord. Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem" (Psa. 122: 1-2), and again, "I will praise him among the multitude" (Psa. 109: 30). Though the Psalms strike a peculiarly personal and inward note in human experience, it is an experience shared in common with others, leading to joint praise and worship. To belong to the chosen people was salvation: to be excommunicate from them was to be cast out from God's presence. This instinctive hold upon community was retained by early believers in New Testament times, and found its satisfaction in the fellowship of the Church. Salvation to them was not only something individually experienced, but that which they shared in common with all who had believed on the Lord Jesus Christ. In this broad sense the Cyprianic formula, "*extra ecclesiam nulla salus*," has more than a measure of justification, and does no violence to truth—only, *ecclesia* must be taken in its original and Scriptural sense and not confined to any outward organization bearing the name Catholic in any of its forms, or, indeed, to any other system which does not implicitly include all who belong to Christ. It is only "with all saints" (Eph. 3: 18) that we shall come to grasp in all its dimensions God's dealings in grace. And is not the consummation of joy in the kingdom of God spoken of as "sitting down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob" in that kingdom? (Matt. 8: 11). We are not wandering stars isolated in the firmament of grace, but have our orbit in the ordered constellations of spiritual being, though by reason of our present limited vision we may not yet see this in full perspective.

Heaven's highest praise is communal. "Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 1: 5-6). Ancient hymns maintain this tradition, notably the *Te Deum*

Laudamus, uniting as it does the common praise of the Church with that of "the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, and the noble army of martyrs." Their use may decline into mere outward formalism, but is in itself wholesome and sound. In the event of such decline, reaction to individual experience may restore the balance. During periods of evangelical revival, when personal feeling becomes intense, song not unnaturally turns to fervent expression of individual faith: the hymnology of Charles Wesley and other Evangelicals illustrates this. Many of our favourite English hymns, as, for example, "Rock of ages, cleft for me," "Jesus, Lover of my soul," "Come, O Thou Traveller unknown," "Sun of my soul, Thou Saviour dear," and "Abide with me, fast falls the eventide," like many of the Psalms, touch those depths of personal experience in which the soul finds itself standing alone in the presence of God. We instinctively cling to their use: rightly so, for they enshrine that moment of crisis when the soul bursts out of the darkness of sin into the freedom and glory of eternal life. But in their exclusive use may there not rise a danger of self-centred preoccupation with our own personal blessing and happiness to the neglect of privileges and responsibilities entailed in our being fellow-members with others in the body of Christ? The noblest Christian hymns are those in which hearts and minds unite in communal praise, when individual adherence to Christ becomes merged in the fellowship of the Christian congregation. Such praise makes vocal our part in the great prophetic drama of the ages, and magnifies the glory of Him who has so wrought for the blessing and salvation of men.

There is something deeply satisfying in the thought that salvation not only brings us into a right personal relationship with our Creator and Redeemer, but that it relates us in a very vital way with the sum of things being worked out in time and space, and in particular with the Divine purpose expressed in human history. Such an outlook gives Christian faith proportion and balance, deflates pride, and promotes within us a due realization of our modest place in that great multitude which no man can number. Most of all, it magnifies Christ, who is thus recognized in His fulness as expressed in His members. He is seen, not only to *be* all, but to be *in* all, to be ALL in ALL. In the new creation "there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman: but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3: 11). This spiritual kingdom is in being now: its future manifestation will only make visible something veiled as yet to sight but real to faith.

XII

THE UNITY OF ALL THINGS IN GOD

THE CONCEPTION OF HISTORY AS A GRAND UNITY, WITHIN which all the accidents of time may be resolved, is possible only to God. God sees history whole. To Him a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years. In this He reigns alone. Ancient philosophy and modern science alike fail to give us this inner perspective of time. The conclusion of Solomon, that "no man can find out the work that God hath done from the beginning even to the end" (Eccles. 3: 11), is abundantly justified from experience. But what could not be discovered *by* man has been discovered *to* man: this discovery is made to us in the Bible. Genesis gives us origins: the book of the Revelation, conclusions: the Writings between, the whole long course of man's spiritual history. Prophecy moves freely throughout this vast field. Reading the Book, we begin to perceive that the unity of Scripture is, in some vital and mysterious way, correlated with the unity of human history. This conclusion, when formed, must profoundly affect our personal attitude to the Bible.

If all Scripture is thus vitally related to God's activity in history, the fulfilment of Scripture must, in some sense, coincide with the full sum of God's purpose at the end of the ages. In a word, the Scriptures are teleological. They are directed toward a final disposition of all things. Their inner dynamic force moves unerringly toward the fulness of times, when all created things, whether in heaven or on earth, shall be subdued to the authority of God. This element gives them their prophetic and apocalyptic character. It dominates alike the histories and the doctrinal teachings. Moreover, this eschatological outlook is not, as sometimes alleged, an escape from present realities, a reaction to disillusionment and despair: it is rather the consistent hold, in despite of adverse circumstances, upon a sure and certain but long-deferred hope. It is, in truth, the very life-stream of the Scriptures.

That history derives its final unity from God is supported by solemn personal affirmations, given by God Himself through the mouth of His prophets. In the confusion of the nations the Lord reassures the faith of His people in His sovereignty over time and space, saying:

"I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God" (Isa. 44: 6).

And again:

"I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me;

"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done" (Isa. 46: 9-10)

And yet again:

"Who hath wrought and done it, calling the generations from the beginning? I the LORD, the first, and with the last, I am he" (Isa. 41: 4).

As the First, He is the primal Lawgiver of an ordered universe: as the Last, He is the ultimate Judge of all. He rules every intervening circumstance. Time and space are subject to His Word. He who is before all things is also after all things. He who speaks the word of creation speaks also the word of destiny; thus uniting in Himself the function of Lawgiver and of Judge. And so it is written, "One only is the lawgiver and judge" (James 4: 12).

In thinking of history as one complete whole we must not forget that the material from which it is composed is that of individual persons. Historical movements are the activities of personality. Co-ordination can only come through ability to grasp the varied and multitudinous elements that compose society. Where, then, may be found the single personality who can so hold together all history in himself as to control its complex movement and secure the fulfilment of the great scheme of Divine prophecy embodied in the Scripture?

"And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open the book, or to look thereon.

"And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book, and the seven seals thereof.

"And I saw, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth" (Rev. 5: 4-6).

In this apocalyptic vision we have the answer to our question. It is He whom on earth John had known as Jesus of Nazareth, now risen from the dead and seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; and who in the sublime consciousness of Godhood could say of Himself, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Rev. 22: 13).

The promises of the patriarchal period, the types of the Levitical institutions, the Messianic hopes of the prophetic writings, the records of the four evangelists, the Christology of the Pauline letters, and the visions of the Apocalypse, bear

common witness to one great fact, that the processes of the Divine purpose throughout the ages are controlled by Christ. An enumeration of some of the more significant allusions in Scripture will show that this is so.

"I will put enmity between thee (the serpent) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3: 15).

"Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee.

"Ask of me, and I shall will thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psa. 2: 7-8).

"And I saw in the night visions, and, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

"And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7: 13-14).

"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory:

"And before him shall be gathered all the nations; and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats" (Matt. 25: 31-32).

". . . unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth; in him" (Eph. 1: 10).

"For in him were all things created, in the heavens, and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him and unto him" (Col. 1: 16).

"And they sing a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5: 9).

As the Christ, the Son of the Highest, incarnate in human flesh, Himself truly God and truly man, this One of whom the Scriptures bear witness is the pivot upon whom history is balanced. All things were made by Him, and by Him shall all things be gathered together in one. As the heir of all things, the One by whom God ordained and fashioned the ages of time, Christ now sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high, upholding all things by the word of His power, and only awaiting the day when all

things shall finally be subjected unto Him and God will be all in all (Heb. 1: 2-3; I Cor. 15: 28).

Time centres in Him. Values are given to antecedent and to subsequent events by those of His incarnation: supremely so, by His death and resurrection. This Divine event is a central point of energy, the radiation of which is thrown out to the extremes of human history. It penetrates in every direction. In the eternal Present of this, the great Event of history, subsist alike the Past and the Future. It is the key to the human situation. Take it away, or weaken its spiritual content, and the Old Testament becomes a pointless collection of Hebrew records, and the New Testament writings an unfounded fantasy of religious enthusiasts. The deliberate and continuous emphasis placed, throughout all parts of Scripture, upon this dynamic act of God, illustrates how the Scripture itself is held together in Christ, and finds its fulfilment in Him.

Prophecy binds history with God. It shows history to be a grand scheme, grounded in the decisions of the Divine will. Were history a self-developing process we could conceivably interpret it in terms of natural evolution; but prophecy shows it to be the concrete expression in time of a Divine purpose. The structure of events is not fortuitous but deliberate. The shape of things to come has its mysterious origin in the depths of that inscrutable Will from which all things proceed and take form and meaning.

"For who among men, knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of

God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2: 11). Until disclosed through prophecy the decisions of the Divine mind are incalculable by human foresight or intelligence, and baffle the conjectures of human reason. All things are being worked out after the counsels and foreknowledge of God (Eph. 1: 11). Even in human affairs thought and purpose precede action. Before the execution of a great enterprise, a whole scheme of things is planned for in the mind—remote contingencies foreseen and provided against, means and methods worked out, alternative possibilities considered in order to provide freedom within a fixed framework. All this may be done before ever a word is said about it; then, to show that events are not simply to regulate themselves, decisions and plans are announced beforehand, not perhaps all at once, but in stages appropriate to the progress of the work. In some such way prophecy shows forth the wisdom and foreknowledge of God, even as time and space show forth His handiwork and power. Certainly so serious student of history can afford to neglect Bible prophecy. The fact that the Bible puts

forth a claim so comprehensive and, if true, so important for human destiny, makes it all the more imperative that such a claim should at least receive a proper hearing. On the face of it there is no reason why it might not be true, and so also the adequate interpretation of the problem lying in the heart of life.

The cross was, and still is, the sign of the intersecting attitudes of God and man, the decisive encounter between human sin and Divine love. There, prophecy rises to its meridian: there, history has its culmination. On man's part, a public decision has been proclaimed: on God's part, a predetermined counsel fulfilled. The resultant crisis exposes with inescapable logic the real state of affairs. Man's latent opposition to God here becomes, in one act, open revolt. Diplomatic relationships are broken off. The cross is in effect a gesture of undisguised hostility: from the consequences of this act no retreat is possible. Initiative for further action remains with God.

That initiative has been taken. In the resurrection of Christ, God has negated man's decision. "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob—the God behind the history and behind the prophecy—has glorified his son Jesus, whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate" (Acts 3: 13). The witness of the apostles is explicit upon this fact. They reiterate it again and again, as being of major importance, saying:

"Him . . . ye have taken, and by the hand of lawless men did crucify and slay:

"Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death" (Acts 2: 23-24).

"God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2: 36).

"Ye denied the Holy One and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted unto you:

"And killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses" (Acts 3: 14-15).

"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even in him doth this man stand here before you whole" (Acts 4: 10).

The situation created by the cross is therefore completely in the hands of God, who has dealt with it by elevating this same Jesus, whom men crucified, to the seat of universal authority, and by appointing a day in which, by that Man, He will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17: 31). The further proclamation that, by an act of grace, an amnesty extended toward the whole world, God is now exercising His sovereignty in bestowing remission of sins on all who will repent and believe on the Name of His Son, is the very heart of the Christian Gospel.

From this it will be readily seen that salvation is not now a case of recovering a forfeited position (as if we could undo the cross), but of being lifted up into a new spiritual environment, an experience so radical that it is described as a passing from death unto life. The whole world, by the cross, is now found in resistance to God, and subject to His judgment: the whole world, by that same cross, is now, according to the witness of the prophets and apostles, the subject of Divine mercy. Under this conjunction of circumstances, therefore, we are addressed as individuals, by God, in the Gospel. The death and resurrection of Christ create for each of us a moral dilemma from which there is no escape. A personal decision must be made, and upon that decision hangs, not only our present happiness, but our future destiny.