

ADDRESSES

AT THE

INAUGURATION

OF

REV. EDWARD LEWIS CURTIS, PH. D.

AS PROFESSOR IN THE

MCCORMICK THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY,

APRIL 6th, 1887.

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PROFESSOR OF OLD TESTAMENT LITERATURE AND EXEGESIS,

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OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, CHICAGO.

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THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

INAUGURATION EXERCISES

At a meeting of the Board of Directors of the McCormick Theological Seminary of the Presbyterian Church in April 1886, Rev. Edward Lewis Curtis, Ph. D., who for the past five years had acted as Instructor and Associate Professor in the Seminary, was elected Professor of Old Testament Literature and Exegesis. This election was approved by the General Assembly which met in Minneapolis, Minn., in May 1886. The formal inauguration took place by appointment of the Board, on the evening of Wednesday, April 6th, in the Chapel of the Church of the Covenant, Chicago. The Order of Exercises on the occasion was as follows:

PRAYER, by the Rev. J. F. Magill, D. D., Fairfield, Iowa.

READING OF THE SCRIPTURES, by the Rev. James McLeod, D. D., Indianapolis, Ind.

SINGING, by the Students.

THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS, by the Rev. J. L. Withrow, D. D., Chicago.

THE CHARGE, by the Hon. C. C. Brown, President of the Board, Springfield, Ill.

INAUGURAL ADDRESS, by Professor Curtis.

BENEDICTION, by the Rev. S. J. Nichols, D. D., St. Louis, Mo.

The Board of Directors requested the speakers to furnish their addresses for publication. Dr. Withrow was unable to comply with this request.

THE CHARGE

BY

HON. C. C. BROWN, PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

THE TEACHER OF THE PREACHER.

“All thy children shall be taught of God,” is the claim which inspiration makes for the members of the church in gospel times. An intelligent piety is to pre-empt and distinguish the church of Christ.

This does not imply that the loaf is to be placed high on the shelf, or that the teaching shall be such as to make it hard for him that runneth to read, or for the fool to understand, but that the people shall be so taught of the Lord as not merely to be saved, but to be a power unto salvation as well. It requires no great amount of knowledge to be a saved christian. But it requires some intelligence, some acquaintance with the knowledge of divine things, to be a useful christian, a christian of importance and value. Hence the New Testament church is to have this distinguishing feature, her children shall all be taught of the Lord. More is to be expected of the rank and file, the members of the church, under the gospel dispensation, than in former times. It is a sad fact that there are many christians of this day, who try to divorce intelligence from faith—many who do not hesitate to speak slightly of the evidences which substantiate christianity, to decry and depreciate the study of them, and to pronounce that study unnecessary; and yet they extol faith, and cry to the multitude, “believe, believe,” without offering a reason for the faith that is in them.

As an eminent writer has justly said, “This is like driving to the door of a hungry family a bullock and inviting them to eat without any preparation for their necessities or tastes.” This is not the intelligent faith that is inculcated and applauded in the Scriptures. It is not the faith that has destroyed so many false systems and beliefs in the ages of the past, that has built churches, founded great institutions of learning, carried the gospel to the ends of the earth, and made the

name of christian honored and respected in the world, and precious in the sight of God.

God would have his children drink deep from the boundless ocean of his grace, to draw into his very presence; he would not have them walk in darkness but in the radiance of heavenly light.

If the people of God are to be taught, and a more intelligent piety prevail in the church in order to its advanced usefulness, then how important that those who are to be called to be God's immediate instruments in teaching his people, should be well fitted and equipped for instructing the people. God has his plan of teaching the people, the priest's lips must not only keep knowledge but be able to give it forth. "The church is the divinely appointed agency for saving sinners, the preacher is the great moral and religious educator"—he is the Lord's messenger, who is to receive the word at his mouth, and give it to the people, but the preacher must be taught also. If the mantle of Elijah falls on Elisha, the teaching of Elijah must fall on the young man. He must go from the school of the prophets and not from the workshop, the plow handles, or the other professions of life, and he must take with him the Word of the Lord. The power and success of the preacher will always depend upon how his theological teacher has furnished and equipped him for his work.

The occasion which brings us together fittingly leads to the consideration of this theme—the teacher of the preacher, what should he be? Time will permit the mention of but a few of the necessary qualifications.

First of all he must be a man of God—he must comprehend by faith the riches in Christ Jesus, in whom all fullness dwells—he must grow in grace, at the end of each year, each month, each day—he should be able to report progress, to be more and more sensible of the presence of God than ever before. The hopes engendered in his heart, the blessings received in his walk with Christ on earth, and the happiness in store for him in the world to come, should impel him to declare to the young men in his care, surrounded as they are by the allurements and the temptations of the world, that if they would have this hope, this joy, this comfort, and have fellowship with God and his son Jesus Christ, they must walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith they are called.

He should be an artist in his way or rather in his work. As the artist stands above the amateur as being professionally interested in any line of study, so the teacher of preachers should not be a novice at his work any more than the preacher at his. He should not only

have the taste or attachment for, but the grace and art of the business, and in imparting his knowledge to others, he must be patient—patience is the daughter of faith. The troubles, the cares, the disappointments of this life call for the exercise of his grace.

When the mother of John Wesley was engaged in teaching a verse of Scripture to her children, her husband said, “I wonder at your patience, you have told the child twenty times the same thing.” “Had I mentioned the matter only nineteen times,” replied that noble woman, “I should have lost all my labor.”

Line upon line and precept upon precept should be the motto of every good teacher. The mind often cannot be impressed and yet may drink in knowledge at certain times.

It is related, I think, of Dr. Spring, that grand pulpit orator and preacher, that he was called to the bed-side of a dying man—a man of large mental capacity and engaged in the railroad business, who had listened to his preaching for a long term of years. He besought the doctor to tell him the plan of salvation. The doctor had been thundering from the pulpit in his hearing for many years the doctrine of salvation, whilst he was thinking of railroads, stocks, and bonds.

I knew a lady of fine literary attainments, the daughter of a celebrated clergyman, converted in early youth, so ecstatic over a sermon on the love of God that she declared that her father and all the ministers she had ever heard, had failed to preach on that subject—and yet her father with a power few preachers possess, had set forth in her hearing time and again that love in burning words, and brought thousands to the cross of Christ.

The theologian is to be made very much through the medium of language, this is the vehicle of ideas, the track on which mental furniture is to be shipped from the store-house of the teacher to the brain of the scholar. An acquaintance, therefore, not only with the science of language, but with its art is necessary, and the teacher should not only know himself, but the man whom he is trying to furnish, not simply what his mental capacity is, but what are the principal avenues to his nature.

We often talk of “getting the hang of the house,” which is no small difficulty, but getting the “hang” of the man in making preachers is quite as important, and in order to know ones self, to know our own character aright, we must first make ourselves acquainted with that of God, for it is in his light that we see light clearly. Men of real ability are often pronounced failures simply because they are not understood. The eminent professor Orfila was asked the precise dose

of poison it would be safe for a fly to take. He replied, "I should want to know something about the particular fly under treatment, his size, age, health, habits of life, whether married or single and what were his surroundings in life." Surely, if a fly deserves so much study for wise treatment, an immortal soul preparing for the ministry needs to be understood and carefully studied.

The teacher or preacher in order to be a power, must have what the world calls common sense, without this desirable furniture of the mind, talents, genius, great learning, will be of little avail. This sense is not attained, so much by the study of books as by intercourse with men, by studying their characters in all the vocations of life, and by some attention to the practical business affairs of the world—in other words it is that sense that gives us the power to reject or repel that force which would interfere with healthy thought and actions—it is that power of self-balance or self-regulation ever ready to be utilized when occasion demands—it is that power which enables us to hold the furniture of the mind in subjection and thus produce a state of equipoise until we are able to choose the wisest, safest and best course—some may call it wisdom from intuition, but it is sharpened and seconded by reflection and investigation.

How often do we see men of great learning, in all professions of life unable to utilize their powers for want of this particular talent. We must ask for this wisdom from the Father of Light with the full assurance that He will not withhold any good thing from His children. That was not a vain prayer which Mr. Moody offered some years ago, when he was annoyed beyond measure by a brother gifted in many respects, and yet destitute of this wisdom, when he prayed in the brother's presence that the Lord would give brother B. a little more common sense.

Finally, the teacher or the preacher should not be satisfied with merely storing the intellect with the treasures of knowledge. Intellectual furniture there must be, and the times call for full equipment here, but this is not the end chiefly to be desired. It is not with the intellect merely that men come to saving faith. Culture and education are desirable, but earnest piety more important still—the heart must be changed, the affections raised to God. The Lord does not say, Except ye be intelligent, except ye be cultured. But, Except ye be converted, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven—with the heart men believe unto righteousness. The education of the heart, the affections, should be a prime work with the theologian. Sir Mathew Hale in speaking of his intellectual endowments said, "I have not

esteemed them the best furniture of my mind, but have accounted them but dross in comparison with the knowledge of Christ and Him crucified." Teachers with heads there must be, but there is a heart qualification which is the principal thing. A garden may be enriched, and yet the weeds will grow ranker than on the sterile soil that surrounds it—culture of the intellect merely does not bring men to Christ. "Let no man deceive himself." "If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool that he may be wise." "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy which temple ye are." "Taste and see that the Lord is good." "Eat, O friends, drink, yea, drink, abundantly, O beloved." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters." "Christ in you the hope of glory." These verses plainly teach us that religion is to be best experienced in the heart.

MY DEAR BROTHER: The directors of the McCormick Theological Seminary, having confidence in your scholarship, in your piety, in your zeal for the church of Christ, believing you to be in full harmony and in love with the doctrines of the church with which we are connected, have unanimously called you to one of the important chairs of this institution. The directors do this with the full assurance that you will perform its duties with credit to yourself and to the institution.—Never has the institution been better equipped for work; through the liberality of Cyrus McCormick, his executors, and especially the liberality of his noble wife, who, in sunshine and in storm, has ever been the friend of this institution, it stands to-day, in point of equipment, equal to any in the land.—I charge you to preach the Word, let no uncertain sound emanate from its portals, let its walls ever resound in the years to come with praises to the most high God—keep it in harmony with our beloved church and make it a home for young men, however lowly, who desire to carry the news of salvation to a lost world. The time is short, the night cometh when no man can work, be diligent, be faithful unto death.

"We live in deeds, not years,
 In thoughts, not breaths,
 In feeling, not in figures on the dial,
 We should count time by heart throbs,
 He lives most, who thinks most,
 Feels the noblest, acts the best."

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

BY

REV. EDWARD LEWIS CURTIS, PH. D.

THE OLD TESTAMENT FOR OUR TIMES.

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Board of Directors:

The subject that I have chosen for this evening is one suggested by the professor's chair into which I have just been inducted. It is, *The Old Testament for Our Times.*

We live in a period of special interest in the Old Testament. Men are working on and investigating that portion of God's Word as never before. Many causes have led to this. The Bible as a whole, is being studied to-day more than ever. This is because Christ's spirit of saving the lost is so active within the church, and the multitude is increasing of those eager to know of that which tells of Him. This age also is pre-eminently protestant. Now Protestantism means the Bible as supreme authority in reference to faith and practice, and the right of free inquiry, touching the Bible along with everything else. Men to-day are not satisfied in simply receiving old statements of religious truth. They ask after the basis of them. Many desire also statements which shall not be marked so much by human reason, as by the fresh stamp of the Word of God. There is a wide spread feeling that theology may have become too much a philosophical system, rather than a simple expression of the teachings of the Word. Hence a so-called Biblical Theology is demanded, and in search of this the Old Testament is being studied.

Special, outside causes also have led to this great interest in the Old Testament. The sacred writings of all people are now being carefully investigated in connection with the new science of comparative religion. The pursuit is intense to know the primitive faiths of the world. Hence the Old Testament is studied from a purely scientific point of view, to classify and bring into line the religion of the ancient Hebrews.

There is great interest also just now in the Semitic languages. Now all the literature of one of these, the Hebrew, save a few inscriptions, is found in the writings of the Old Testament. They are its classics. Hence linguistically, they have a great importance. The Greek scholar need have but little, if any acquaintance with the New Testament, but the Hebrew scholar must know the Old. He cannot find anything else to read.

Modern discovery also has helped in this direction. They read like a romance, those results of eastern exploration, that the spade and pick have brought to light writings four millenniums old, and that we now know that Moses might have used documents, had he wished, written five hundred years before he penned a line of the Pentateuch. ¹ This Babylonian literature thus discovered has many points in common with the Old Testament. Its language, having a close affinity to the Hebrew, helps us to understand Hebrew phrases and gives new thought to Hebrew words. There have been found narratives of similar subject with statements strikingly parallel to some in Genesis; Psalms of the same structure and not unlike in sentiment to those of David; and again and again records of the names of Israel's kings and events of Israel's history. ² A new setting has thus been given to portions of the Old Testament, and it forms a part of the most fascinating field of historical research and investigation.

Then also the Christian conception of the Bible as containing the revealed Word of God runs counter to the modern deistic or rather agnostic view of the world, and this may possibly lead some to study the Old Testament with the intention of undermining Christian faith, and men of the church study to save their faith and refute infidel objection.

Hence, from all these causes there is now especial interest in the Old Testament. Its study is in the air. Is there now anything providential in this? Does this study fit into any present need? Will it bear any special fruit of lesson or truth adapted to the immediate hour? Or in other words, is the Old Testament significantly for our times? I think it is. As containing a divine revelation it is, of course, for all times. As a book of rich and precious consolation, as long as there are troubled and heavy hearts here on earth, it will find a place. The church can never do without its precious promises. "When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee: and through the rivers

1. See Art. *Babylonia* Ency. Brit. 9th Ed.

2. See Schrader's *Cuneiform Inscriptions and Cheyne's Translation of the Psalms*.

they shall not overflow thee.”¹ The church can never do without its precious experience. “The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want.”² The Psalms, the songs of Israel, are as much read as any other portion of God’s word. They comfort, they nerve, they sustain; they are the cry of the thankful shouting for joy, of the distressed wailing from the depths of despair, of believers humbly conscious of their own integrity, and of believers penitent and weighed down with a sense of guilt. The harp of David sends forth an infinite variety of sounds expressing every emotion of the believer’s heart. The law also of the Old Testament is always in place. Sinai must always stand opposite Calvary; the knowledge of sin, over against the knowledge of salvation.

I.

The church also can never do without its testimony for Christ. This leads to the first specific point which I present. The Old Testament is for our times as, *An Evidence of Christianity*.

In this it fits into a special need of to-day which calls so loudly for the foundations of belief, and demands a review of all testimonies for truth. Blot out the Old Testament, then we blot out one of the strongest reasons why we should accept the statements of the New, and believe that Jesus of Nazareth was both man and God. The resurrection of Christ needs the evidence of the Old Testament looking forward to that event. I need not recall how often it is appealed to in the New Testament. Neither also is the belief in the incarnation easily reasonable without the preparation for it found in these old writings. The words, the thoughts of Israel’s prophets, the significant events of Israel’s history, the belief, the hope of that ancient people, there embodied, are historic facts, and stand as an impregnable fortress of our Christian faith. These sacred records were written long before Christ came, and their testimony of Him is unshaken by any school of criticism. For however men may distort their narratives and shift from century to century their composition, still here they are, written, I repeat, long before Christ came, and presenting a wonderful correspondence between Him and them. No criticism can ever wash that out. Suppose Moses did not write the proto evangelium, or the promise given to Abraham (although the evidence points to their origin in Scripture through him), yet some one wrote them, SOME ONE, and

1. Is. XLIII., 2.

2. Ps. XXIII., 1.

even if at the time of the exile, then by the power of God, knowing the purpose that God did have at the beginning of man's history and Israel's history; giving also that which as a beam of hope, a ray of light, must have been there, for there was one, ever advancing, growing brighter and brighter in anticipation, taken up by one and another in story and song, until at last it broke forth realized in the one who said, "I am the light of the world," and to whom we now look back, as they looked forward. Suppose Isaiah did not draw that wondrous portrait of the man of sorrows, acquainted with grief, who should yet see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied, yet some one did. The picture was given by the power of God, revealing a divine purpose, dimly understood and comprehended, it may be, until there appeared its counterpart—the vicarious, suffering Messiah, the risen and glorified Redeemer. Thus it is with all Old Testament teachings and history. The lines of their prefigurement of and preparation for Christ and Christianity can never be obliterated. They are like the stars set in the etherial blue. They shine undimmed and undisturbed by theories of astronomers. Prof. Patton has well refused to make even the utterly unwarranted reconstructions of Jewish history proposed by Kuenen and Wellhausen, the logical warrant for denying the supernatural character of Christianity, saying: "For Judaism, however explained, is genetically related to the Christian religion." "Men may refuse to believe that God appeared to Moses and delivered to him a most completed system of jurisprudence and a complex sacrificial ritual. But they cannot ignore the correspondence between the Old Testament and the New."¹ The candid historical scholar cannot resist the belief that Jewish history was a series of preparations for Christ's advent. Even if one should endeavor to reject the inspiration of the book that records this history, he cannot doubt the inspiration of the history itself. God was there. Finding God thus in the history will lead one also to find him in the writing of the Book. For the Book and the history are one.

This study of the Old Testament will do then for apologetics that which has been accomplished by the recent study of the New. This latter has given us the true historic Christ. This former will give us the true historic Israel, prophetic of Christ.

1. *Pres. Rev.*, vol. IV, p. 360.

II.

The study of the Old Testament in its relation to the New teaches us the important and especially timely lesson of *Modesty in the Interpretation of Scripture*. The Old Testament is not the New. In part it was of the Israel of Canaan and has been outgrown and supplanted, or rather filled up and completed, certain elements, like the husk or shell of ripening fruit falling away. The, "But I say unto you," has taken the place of the, "It hath been said by them of old time." This has been recognized in the church from the beginning. It is too plainly taught in the New Testament to be denied. It has caused men even to think the Old of little importance and scarcely worth studying. That this is a mistake I need not argue. Old Testament study, however, reveals another fact in this connection well worth heeding—that is the limitations of divine revelation and the relativeness of the divine word. We are warned against absolutely pressing the statements of Scripture into the four corners of their literal meaning, and declaring that we know exactly how the future purposes of God will be realized. "The Pentateuch knows nothing," says Oehler, "of a future change in the law, or of an abrogation of it even in part." The various statutes given to Moses are represented as perpetually binding in their force. The specific day of the passover was to be observed by specific ordinance forever.² The priesthood of Aaron was an everlasting priesthood.³ The ordinance of clean and unclean persons was a perpetual statute.⁴ And yet how many of these in form have been completely set aside. Promises and predictions also concerning the Messiah have not in their letter been realized in Jesus of Nazareth. He never bore the name Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace: He never sat upon the throne of David, his father, in a literal sense. He never brought political peace to his people. He was a far different person from that which an honest and candid and devout study of Old Testament scripture might have led one to expect. The story of Jesus of Nazareth in his life and death never could have been written beforehand; only after he had appeared, after he had lived and died and risen, was it seen how thus were to be fulfilled the promises of Israel. Prophecy is known then only through its fulfillment. The final purposes of God, save in great outline, are unknown and hidden

1. Old Testament Theology, § 97.

2. Ex. XII., 13.

3. Ex. XL., 15.

4. Num. XIX., 10, 21.

to us. We have not yet reached the end of Divine Revelation. The Old Testament church stood waiting for the Messiah, with the confidence expressed in the words of the Samaritan woman, "When he is come, he will tell us all things."¹ Christ came, but he has not told us all things. The New Testament apart from its historic facts and their explanation, advances very little beyond the Old, save in a fuller revelation of divine love and of a future life. So we await His glorious second coming, live in that blessed hope, and learn, I trust, to be modest in our interpretations of Scripture and our claims of fully understanding the Word; learn to take that which is clear and unmistakable, that about which the church has in all ages been of one mind, and to leave the rest outside of the realm of authoritative dogma, to be matters of private thought and meditation.

III.

The Old Testament impresses upon us also *The Importance and Significance of this Life*. It has been thought strange by many that the Old Testament scriptures had so little to say concerning the life beyond. Various reasons have been given for this fact. Some have assumed that a conception of a future and immortal state was as vivid and clear to the ancient Hebrews as to us, and that this is always to be presupposed in reading those records, that no mention of it was made because none was needed. This is a mistake. Consider the sad pathetic words of the Psalmist² clinging to life, of Hezekiah when he said:

"The grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee:

They that go down into the pit, cannot hope for thy truth.

The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day."³

These could not have been written by those who had the full New Testament hope and belief. The New Testament also denies full Christian knowledge and assurance to the past. Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light.⁴ It is wrong, however, to go to the other extreme and deny to the Old Testament writers a belief in a future life. Death with them was not an eternal sleep. Death also did not leave them mere shades wandering aimlessly on another shore. No, stronger than death was the love of Jehovah, and with him there must be life hereafter.

1. Jno. IV., 25.

2. Ps. VI., 5.

3. Is. XXXVIII., 18, 19.

4. I. Tim. I., 10.

“God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol,
For he shall receive me.”¹

There is no idle speculation about this future state. Firm faith rested in this assurance and therewith was content. This life was the all important, and no destiny was known that did not grow out of this. Here then is a needed thought, when men are prone on the one hand to find a second probation, and on the other to emphasize to such an extent divine forgiveness and the final entrance into glory, so as to make it appear that it made no difference whether a life had been all wasted and thrown away, and then at the last moment saved, or whether from the beginning it had been full of noble consecration and service. The Old Testament preaches the necessity of right living based upon a right heart. There is no mere legalism. The source of all is divine grace: God calling, yet being called; God knowing, yet being known; God loving, yet being loved; the heart, the disposition, is everything. There is no magical formula of intellectual knowledge or of external rite.

“Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.”²

The rapture of the New Testament is not found in the Old. We are not transported with Paul to the third heavens, but there is a grandeur, a solemnity, a heroism, in the conception of the true life linked to Jehovah, reminding one of the familiar lines:

“A sacred burden is the life ye bear.
Look on it, lift it, bear it solemnly.
Stand up and walk beneath it steadfastly.”—

A conception needed in this age of so much mawkish gush and sentimentality, and which is the keynote of so much of the best preaching of the present day, which emphasizes continually CHARACTER.

IV.

The Old Testament enters also into *Sympathy with the Anxious Struggles of Men over the Mysteries of Life*. Possibly these struggles are no more to-day than they ever have been, and yet they seem so. Men to-day think. They are not like dumb, driven cattle, blindly

1. Ps. XLIX., 15.

2. Is. LVII., 15.

accepting the traditions of the past. The scientific investigation of both physical, mental and moral phenomena, has placed them in a new world. Their thought environment is all different from that of their fathers. And they are asking with pathetic earnestness, what is life? Through the wide reaching philanthropy, that Christ-like mark of our day, has come up also the old question, old and yet ever new, of the problem of evil, and above all, why do the innocent suffer. This now is the thought of the book of Job, and in that grand and matchless poem I find God's imprint of sympathy with all those who wrestle to-day with these dark problems, and I find also the only remedy, *God*. This old revelation does not brush aside with scorn the anguish and bitterness of souls who find it hard, very hard, to submit to God's dealings. Nay, it tells out the whole experience. There is the sad cursing of the day of birth,¹ the heart-rending longing that life might never have been,² the bold complaint against God:

"Know now that God hath subverted me in my cause,
And hath compassed me with his net.
Behold I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard:
I cry for help, but there is no judgment."³

Full utterance thus is given, and though in the end there is condemnation for lack of faith and submission, yet a still severer condemnation is spoken against those self-appointed teachers, who insisted on the application of their peculiar dogma, and wondered why their suffering friend did not through it give God the glory. Of a similar tenor also is the book of Ecclesiastes, that strange riddle to many, which seems with its sad refrain, "Vanity of vanities all is vanity," more full of skepticism than faith, and echoes that discontent which lurks at times in nearly every soul and finds expression in all literature. Appropriate now for us is this voice coming from the Word of God, for while men in all ages have thus sung, yet to our age has it been reserved to elevate this pessimistic mood into a powerful system of philosophy, and this book brings us into sympathy with this mood, shows us its reality, and gives us a clew of how we may help men out of the same. Yes, as a recent commentator has said: "Those who study it will find that it meets and has we may believe been providentially designed to meet the special tendencies of modern philosophical thought, and that the problems of life which it discusses are those with which our daily experience brings us in contact. And if they feel, as they will do, that there is hardly any book of the Old Testament which presents so

1. Job III., 3 ff.

2. Job III., 11 ff.

3. Job XIX., 6, 7.

marked a contrast in its teaching to that of the Gospels or Epistles of the New Testament, they will yet acknowledge that it is not without a place in the Divine Economy of Revelation, and may become to those who use it rightly, a school-master leading them to Christ."¹

I believe the church has not generally apprehended the full and true meaning of these old writings. They are not profitable to every mind, but, since found in the Word of God, it has been often thought that in some way they must be. Hence they have been placed on the procrustean bed of allegory and compelled to teach almost everything that fancy could suggest, instead of being taken just as they are, the bitter experiences of souls, tossed and baffled by the problems of this life, to reveal unto us how God sympathizes with such souls, how he would have us deal with them, and how he may even use them to tell us of him.

V.

The Old Testament presents notes of warning also touching upon the great *Social Question of Our Day*.

The dangers of a material civilization rise and loom before us. One class of people are growing richer, richer; another, relatively poorer and poorer. Men are crowding into cities. These are becoming the centres of a luxurious and effeminate civilization. This now was much the case in the latter days of Israel and Judah. Men slept on couches of ivory;² they had music and wine;³ they speculated in grain;⁴ they cheated;⁴ they acquired great estates, buying up all the land in their neighborhood;⁵ they imported foreign articles of luxury;⁶ they oppressed the poor;⁷ their wives and daughters were decked out in the most extravagant style.⁸ All this life, centered in Jerusalem and Samaria, was a miniature of that going on in our own land. It threatened destruction. The prophets, the preachers of those olden times, made then these evils the subject of their earnest warnings, and herein they are a needed model for our own day. We need ethical preachers, men who will arouse the public conscience; an Elijah to denounce Ahab's crime against Naboth,⁹ which has been repeated so often by the strong white man against the poor Indian; an Isaiah to say woe, not simply unto them that are mighty to drink wine,¹⁰ but also woe unto them that join house to house and lay field to field,

1. Cambridge Bible for schools. Ecclesiastes by E. H. Plumptre, D. D., p. 11, 12.

2. Am. VI., 4. 4. Am. VIII., 5. 6. Is. II., 6, 7. 8. Is. III., 16 ff. 10. Is. V., 22

3. Am. VI., 5. 5. Is. V., 8. 7. Mic. III., 2, 3. 9. I. K. XXI., 17 ff.

until they be made to dwell alone in the midst of the land,¹ a woe against grasping monopolies of every sort; a Jeremiah to intercede in behalf of the man-servant and the maid-servant;² an Amos to threaten divine punishment upon those that have sold the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes, that pant after the dust on the head of the poor;³ those who will combine to force up the price of food or fuel, taking bread from the mouth of the hungry and heat from the body of the cold. These, not to mention others, are needed voices that come to us from the Old Testament.

Worthy of consideration also are the principles of land tenure of the Mosaic law,⁴ which commanded a reversal of landed property at the end of every half century to the original owners, thereby keeping it in the hands of small individual holders, preventing the accumulation of great estates on the one hand, and the degradation into abject poverty on the other. Suppose these principles had been in some way insisted upon by the church in the days of her direct power in the past, is it too much to surmise that the land question, which has been at the bottom of so many woes and wrongs in Europe, might never have been? This legislation may be called ideal, or fitted only for an ideal state or condition of affairs, yet it presents an ideal needed for our own times, of a golden mean between opulence and want; a mean expressed in the prayer of Agur,

“Give men either poverty nor riches;
 Feed me with the food that is needful to me;
 Lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord?
 Or lest I be poor and steal,
 And use profanely the name of my God.”⁵

This golden mean according to the Old Testament is intimated to be the goal of humanity, for not only, “Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more, but they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree.”⁶ No mere legislation can bring this about. The Gospel of repentance and faith in Christ is the sole remedy for the woes of mankind, but that Gospel carries with it certain ethical teachings, touching all phases of social and civil life, which gradually are formulated and enter into the consistencies of a true Christianity. These must be sought for, according to the need of the hour, in the whole Word of God, and the Old Testament has its contributions in this direction.

1. Is. V., 8

2. Jer. XXXV., 8 ff.

3. Am. II., 6, 7.

4. Lv. XXV., 8-34.

5. Prov. XXX., 8, 9.

6. Mic. IV., 3, 4.

VI.

Another idea needed for our times is that of *The Immanence of God*. He has been too often conceived of as simply transcendent. That has been the drift of modern thought. Paley's watch picked up on the sand has suggested not only a designer, but as applied to the universe, a designer who, having finished his work, cast it aside to be governed and run by the power and machinery placed within, he himself being so remote as to be unknown, if not unknowable. Thus the very argument which would tell us of the existence of a God, has been turned in the opposite direction, not to bring him near, but to remove him afar. The true conception is given in the Old Testament, which finds God, not simply the Creator of the universe, but ever present therein. The first chapter of Genesis has a counterpart in Psalm CIV. Creation in the beginning by an absolute fiat passes over into an unfolding preservation by a continued presence.

“Yonder is the sea, great and wide,
Wherein are things creeping innumerable,
Both small and great beasts.
There go the ships; [therein.
There is the leviathan, whom thou hast formed to take his pastime
These wait all upon thee,
That thou mayest give them their meat in due season.
That thou givest unto them they gather:
Thou openest thy hand, they are satisfied with good.
Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled;
Thou takest away their breath, they die,
And return to their dust.
Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created;
And thou renewest the face of the ground.”¹

“The whole universe exists in God, as the stars in the ether, as the clouds in the air, the whole universe floats on the pulsing bosom of God.”² Nature is his outer garment. All her movements are of him, the thunder is his voice,³ the lightning from his mouth,⁴ the earthquake his anger,⁵ the light his garment,⁶ the clouds his chariot,⁷ the winds his messengers,⁸ the ice from his breath.⁹ His throne is above the cherubim, symbols of the living powers of nature. But he is never identified with nature. His immanence is not pantheistic. He giveth life to all, is the life of all, is in all natural phenomena, but is independent, apart, separate, and Lord of all.

1. Ps. CIV., 25-30.

2. A. A. Hodge, Pres. Rev. Vol. VIII., p. 10.

3. Ps. XXIX., 3.

4. Ps. XVIII., 8.

5. Ps. XVIII., 7.

6. Ps. CIV., 2.

7. Ps. CIV., 3.

8. Ps. CIV., 4.

9. Job XXXVII., 10.

No natural scene or object in the Old Testament is ever pictured for its own sake, to leave the impression of itself. The Psalmist gazes at the starry heavens by night, he views the wondrous march of the sun by day, but his words are no pen pictures of these brilliant objects: no, these are nothing in themselves, only in their grandeur speaking silently of God. Beauty of form, harmony of color, were conceptions foreign to the Hebrews. Ezekiel's cherubim defy artistic representation. The creations of Job, his magnificent description of a war-horse for example, suggest no pictorial treatment. Indeed that may be said to refuse to come within the power of brush or pencil. The reason is because the description is given not for the sake of the horse, but to awaken religious emotion. This is the highest, the truest study of nature, God ever there. This is much needed in the present day, when in science, in art, in literature, the dominant schools are realistic, and everything is presented for its own sake and nothing higher. There must be scientific exactness, every line must be perfect, but there need be nothing which shall touch once the soul and lift men Godward.

VII.

For this reason we are glad also that the Old Testament is being *Studied as a Literature*. It is needed as a welcome tonic; for in literature men's aims are becoming dwarfed as much as in art. The popular writers of to-day are, as one has said, "photographic literateurs, who do not create ideally, who leave out such grand themes as justice, holiness and devotion; to whom the beauty of holiness is no concern; men who will amplify a mouse or analyze a passion with utter indifference."¹ The Old Testament stands as the highest literature of the world to counteract this tendency. Its study then ought to be encouraged as such. The Holy Ghost gave its thoughts often a high literary finish, we may believe, not without this object in view. It should come a classic into our school rooms. Why confine ourselves to the literature of the peoples who have given us art and law, and omit that of the one who has given us religion?

The Old Testament, as the whole Bible, is not to be made an unnatural and unreal book, by attaching it exclusively to hours of devotion and detaching it from the experiences of ordinary life. "The study of the Bible" says one, "will inevitably lead to holy and devout

1. W. H. Ward in the Independent, Dec. 9, 1886.

thoughts, will bring the student to the presence of God and his Christ, but it is a sad mistake to suppose that the Bible can be approached only in special frames of mind and with peculiar preparation. It is not to be covered as with a funereal pall and laid away for hours of sorrow and affliction. It is not to be regarded with feelings of bibliolatry, which are as pernicious as the adoration of the sacrament. It is not to be used as a book of magic, as if it had the mysterious power of determining all questions at the opening of the book. It is not to be used as an astrologer's horoscope to determine from its words and letters, the structure of its sentences and its wondrous symbolism, through seeming coincidences, the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy in the events transpiring about us or impending over us. The Bible is no such book as this,—it is a book of life, a real book, a people's book. It is a blessed means of grace when used in devotional hours, it has also holy lessons and beauties of thought and sentiment for hours of leisure and recreation. It appeals to the aesthetic and intellectual as well as moral and spiritual faculties, the whole man in his whole life. Familiarity with the Bible is to be encouraged. It will not decrease but rather enhance the reverence with which we ought to approach the Holy God in His Word. The Bible takes its place among the master pieces of the world's literature. The use of it as such no more interferes with devotion than the beauty and grandeur of architecture and music prevent the adoration of God in the worship of a cathedral. Rather the varied forms of beauty, truth and goodness displayed in the Bible will conspire to bring us to Him, who is the centre and inspiration of them all."¹

VIII.

I mention but one other aspect in which Old Testament words are profoundly significant for our times. I refer to those touching upon the great work of the church in this present hour, *The Evangelization of the World*.

It is frequently said that there are no promises of the world's conversion in the New Testament, only Christ's command to preach. But why these such promises? The Old Testament was the Scripture of those days, and it is full of them. The one given to Abram: "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."² Did that mean the meagre, narrow, small blessing of a little handful snatched out

1. Briggs' *Biblical Study*, pp., 4, 5.

2. Gen. XII., 3.

and saved? Did that mean the blessing of having the gospel preached, witnessed, to save a few and harden the many, making their damnation the greater? That is not the Old Testament conception. "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance."¹ The arch-enemies of God's people, the great powers of the world, are to be one with them.

"Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possessions."²

"I will also give thee a light for the Gentiles,
That thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth."³

"The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."⁴ These were the promises given to Israel; these are the promises given to us. What courage, what hope, what zeal should the church then have? The horizon of God's word is roseate with the morning glow. The realization of our Saviour's prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," is assured.

With this I close: adding only that it has not been my intention to present the main, as I have already intimated, or the most salient and important features of the Old Testament, but only those corresponding to the special thought and need of this hour, not to the general thought and need of every hour. Had I purposed to present the latter, I should have dwelt especially upon the doctrine of Redemption, and spoken of the scarlet and golden cord which binds all Scripture together;—scarlet, telling of the life that must be offered for sin; golden, telling of the love-covenant that no faithlessness can break.

Wondrous indeed is this Old Testament. It takes us back to the beginning, "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy."⁵ It carries us forward, with all its sad tales of man's fall and Israel's perversity, with an unfolding revelation of divine love and redemption, to the sublime outlook of a new heavens and a new earth, death swallowed up forever, tears wiped away from off all faces.⁶ May God give me grace and wisdom to unfold it aright.

1. Is. XIX, 25.

2. Ps. II, 8.

3. Is. XLIX, 6.

4. Is. XL, 5.

5. XXXVIII, 7.

6. Is. XXV, 8.

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