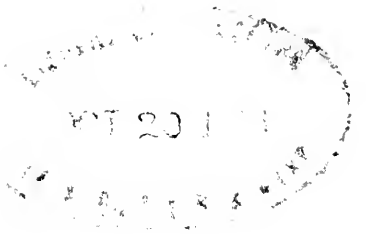
# THE BIBLE A MISSIONARY BOOK

ROBERT F. HORTON, D.D.



# THE BIBLE
# A MISSIONARY BOOK

BY

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# PREFACE

For the sake of any reader whose interest in missions may be greater than his interest in biblical scholarship, it may be well to define beforehand the attitude which is assumed in these pages, towards critical questions and methods of biblical interpretation. That attitude is not personal to the writer, but is that of the large majority of scholars and exegetes who have in recent years contributed most to the understanding of the Bible.

Dr Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* represents the conclusions up to the present moment of the vast weight of British scholarship. The mingled candour and reverence which are the peculiar note of our English theology, here find their completest expression. I may be pardoned for mentioning the

names of Prof. Driver and Prof. George Adam Smith in Old Testament work, and the name of Prof. Sanday in New Testament work, as the best known and the most typical representatives of the attitude assumed in this great dictionary. As the *Encyclopædia Biblica*, edited by Prof. Cheyne, presents the extremest views of present day criticism, and is an invaluable authority for the theories which are mooted and discussed in the progress of theological inquiry, so Dr Hastings' *Dictionary* is the best authority we possess for the cautious conclusions and tested results which have been achieved in the last quarter of a century. Needless to say, the changes effected in these years place a vast difference between the recent work, and the dictionaries which were the great authorities until now. But Hastings' *Dictionary* supersedes its predecessors as inevitably as the ninth edition of the *Encyclopædia Britannica* superseded the eighth. It would be a

dangerous obscurantism to ignore that great change, and it is evident that missionary students, whose task it is to present Christianity to the cultivated races of the East, must remember that educated Hindus, and Japanese, and Chinese, when they want to know the truth about the Bible, will turn, not to the dictionaries and authorities of thirty years ago, but to the latest and most approved works of to-day.

I have therefore assumed, though I know the assumption may sometimes be rash, that the reader is acquainted with the general position occupied by the enlightened and believing scholarship of our time. If any view seems startling or arbitrary, I would urge the reader to consult the article in the *Dictionary of the Bible* on the subject referred to. For example, under *Pentateuch* or *Deuteronomy*, or the *Law*, he will find explained in detail the views which in this brief survey are only assumed; and so with *Chronicles* or *Jonah* or

*Daniel.* Let not the reader suppose that I am broaching a private theory, or in the pursuance of a whim making havoc of accepted traditions, but let him turn to the articles on these books and see the kind, and the weight, of the evidence which has produced the change of view among the experts of biblical study.

There is no doubt a serious difficulty which lies in the path of spiritual progress both at home and abroad. Biblical scholarship has left the piety of the Church a long way in the rear. Many of the most devout and the most honoured of religious leaders have offered the most uncompromising opposition to the whole method and spirit of modern scholarship, with the result that some earnest lovers of the Bible regard with suspicion and aversion the men whose labours have been giving the Bible a new power by bringing it into line with the advancing knowledge and the wider culture of the day. Until

the most fervent believers will open their eyes to the essential piety of a candid and reverent scholarship, the danger must remain of piety and scholarship being antagonists instead of fellow-workers. And that danger can only be overcome when those who understand the two positions, attempt to bring them together by removing the mutual irritations, the impatience of scholarship, and the suspicion of piety.

So far as I know, this book is the first attempt to bring the more modern way of handling Scripture and the missionary cause together. As the friends of missions have been suspicious of critical scholarship, so scholarship has been too absorbed in its own pursuits to pay express attention to missions. But the two must learn to understand one another, if the missionary cause is to make rapid and solid progress; and however slight a step this book may be towards a mutual understanding, it will at least serve to show that missionary

interest and zeal need not be destroyed by the changes which are taking place in the Church's view of the Bible.

For my own part, if I felt that any critical methods of interpreting Scripture disturbed the faith in its missionary message, or cooled my zeal to impart that message to the world, I should feel that those methods stood self-condemned; for of what use is the Bible, if it is not God's book for man, and of what meaning is the Gospel if it is not God's message to the world? A method which robbed me of the missionary character of the Bible, would rob me of Christianity itself. If Christianity is not the religious truth which is meant for all men, and which all men need, a truth therefore which carries in itself the duty of propagating it, I do not want Christianity at all. A religion adapted only for the British, or for Americans, or for Europeans, or for the Aryan race, is not a religion worth any man's professing. If therefore the

critical treatment of the Bible reduced Christianity to a religion of this kind and destroyed the universality of its claim, I should share with all friends of missions the suspicion and condemnation of the method. But, as the following pages show, the effect of using the accepted canons of scholarly criticism is exactly the reverse; the Bible, as understood by science and criticism, always granting that the spirit of faith and obedience is there, is much more of a missionary book than ever before. But it may be said, the expression "always granted the spirit of faith and obedience is there," is a very important proviso, and to admit science and criticism into Scripture will exclude that spirit. To such a counsel of timidity the answer must be given from Scripture, and from experience, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty": Christ reveals Himself in the hearts of some who have very imperfect knowledge of the Scriptures, and that self-revelation

of Christ co-exists with the utmost diversities of biblical interpretation. The faith in Christ is so direct and immediate an experience, and is produced by the Holy Spirit in such a way, that it may be regarded as the ultimate authority which sits in judgment, not only on the Church, but also on the Bible. Without that faith in Christ the faith in Scripture avails little; as Christ Himself says, "ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life . . . but ye will not come to Me." On the other hand, the faith in Christ becomes the key to the Scriptures, and is the security that criticism cannot deprive us of them. Or if I may put it in a single sentence, the Bible, however it is regarded, is enough to bring the soul to Christ, and the soul that has come to Christ, has within itself the means of understanding the Bible.

With this brief explanation I trust that missionary students will be able

to read the present little work without prejudice, as I firmly believe that biblical scholars imbued with the modern spirit, will find in it clear demonstration of the missionary character of the Bible.

Will the reader, before beginning the first chapter, humbly and devoutly pray for the illumination of the Holy Spirit, as the writer has written, constantly offering the same prayer. If the argument be not what "the Spirit saith to the Churches," let it fall to the ground; but if the Spirit is in these words calling Christians of all persuasions and of all opinions to a united and untiring effort to carry the good news of Christ to the limits of the habitable globe, the Spirit must work in the reader, as well as in the writer, to render the words effectual.

# PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THE argument for the Missionary enterprise is threefold, from the Word, from the World, and from the Work. While this little book only attempts to deal with the first, it may be well to show in a sentence or two the argument as a whole.

We are pledged to Missionary zeal and ceaseless activity—

First, because the Bible is a Missionary Book;

Secondly, because the study of the World, as it is, reveals the fact that the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is precisely what it needs;

Thirdly, because the success of the work, so far as it has gone, is surprising, and shows clearly

that if the Church were united, and set upon discharging the obligation, it would be quite possible, within one generation, to cover the earth with the knowledge of the Lord.

The reason for issuing this little book in a simpler and cheaper form is, not only that it has been useful in its first edition, but that it still remains, so far as the writer knows, the only book which shows specifically the Missionary character of the Bible as a whole. It might easily be superseded by something better, if a scholar, full of Missionary zeal, would turn his attention to the subject. But until it is superseded, it is needed—sorely needed.

I have found the argument of this book novel, and even surprising, to people who are reverent students of the Bible, and at the same time strong missionary advocates; that is to say, they are not awake to the first and surest charter of the Church's mission.

## THE SECOND EDITION

When I was requested, four years ago, by some dear and honoured friends whose whole interest lies in Missionary Study, to write such a book, on the ground that there was not in existence anything of the kind, I was incredulous. I supposed that, though I had not seen them, there must be innumerable attempts to show how the Bible itself commits us to Missionary effort. But I have found that my friends were right. And I am glad that I listened to their appeal and did my best (though I was laid aside at the time, and unable to use my eyes) to supply the need. Since then I find that excellent books are appearing which show in detail the missionary bearing of certain parts of the Bible, *e.g.* the Psalter; but if a teacher wishes to put into the hands of a Class a text-book for the study of the Bible as a whole from this special viewpoint, mine is still the only available book.

Great is the argument from the Work. One who keeps his eye on the vanguard

of Christ advancing through the world is kindled into daily enthusiasm by the proof that this Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. No day passes, but the banners are pushed forward, some outpost of evil is undermined, some nation or tribe approaches the place of the breaking forth of children, and takes a glimmer of the dawn. Slowly it may be, but with a majestic certainty, our Lord is taking possession of the earth; the embattled powers of darkness yield.

Great is the argument from the World. Where He is not known the peoples perish. In their callous cruelty to one another, in the withering delusions of superstition and ignorance, in the dull, hopeless outlook, when old religions decay and no new faith is born, the nations of the earth make a dumb, unconscious appeal, to the messengers of the Cross. How they need the glad tidings of hope, the demonstration of love, the working of power!

"Far and wide, though all unknowing,
Pants for Thee each human breast;
Human tears for Thee are flowing,
Human hearts in Thee would rest."

Great is the argument from the Work, great is the argument from the World, but greatest of all is the argument from the Word. That in the last resort is the authority which compels us to advance, when the success of the Work is not apparent, or when the distress of the Christless world seems hardly greater than the distress in this Christian part of the world where we live. The Word is our lawbook, our guide, the charter of our own salvation, the comfort and joy of our lives, "in it we meditate day and night." And this Word is Missionary; it compels us to undertake the task of imparting it to all mankind. We make a discovery: its Law does not help us if we violate the precept of its transmission; its light fails to guide us if we neglect this primary duty; our salvation loses its

surety unless it leads to our seeking to save the world; its consolations fade away, when we decline to carry them to our needy brothers.

This is the supreme argument. May the blessed Spirit use this little book to carry it home to the reader's conscience!

ROBERT F. HORTON.

HAMPSTEAD, 20*th Oct.* 1908.

# CHAPTER I

## THE METHOD OF STUDY

I WAS startled, in conversing with some friends who have a unique acquaintance with missionary literature, to hear that there is no book which gives a comprehensive view of the Bible as a call to missionary work. This, at the first blush, would have seemed a task repeatedly attempted. But I was not able to supplement the knowledge of my friends by mentioning any book which had accomplished it; and, on reflection, I began to realise that such a book could hardly have been written till very recent times, because it is only by the labour of modern scholarship, and in the light of the very modern science of comparative religion, that anyone can form a just notion of the intrinsic missionary

quality of the Bible. I realised, too, this singular anomaly, that while the most original workers in biblical scholarship are blind to the missionary question, the most ardent promoters of the missionary cause are suspicious of biblical science; and that while the students of comparative religion are chiefly engaged in showing the common elements of all religions, they who are forward in missionary zeal are so confident of the supremacy of Christianity that they do not give due consideration to the light which comparative religion casts on Christianity. The book then that is needed has not yet been written, and some years may pass before it can be written, but meanwhile some tentative suggestions may be made in order to turn the attention of missionary students in the right direction, and prepare the Church for a new discovery of the treasure which she possesses in the Word, and of the work which she is to do in the world. At present few devout souls seem to apprehend

how startlingly the view of the Bible which modern scholarship is giving us, illustrates the old seventeenth-century maxim that "the Lord hath yet more light and truth to break forth from His Word." We have to recognise that the recasting of the literature and the historical perspective that criticism has effected, bring out the missionary character of the Bible in a way which was largely obscured by traditional views. And it is hard to conceive how the Bible is to accomplish its missionary work in the world until the Church and the missionary are able to bring into clear relief its intrinsic missionary purpose.

At present, I am told, when a missionary address is to be given on the practical work in the field, on the statistics and the methods of particular missions, or on the lives of the missionaries, the speaker is easily able to gather ample material and to utter words which live and burn ; but when the same speaker attempts what may seem to be

the much easier task of commending the missionary enterprise by the appeal to Scripture as the acknowledged authority, his speech becomes the mere quotation of certain familiar texts, and as it is trite, ceases to be convincing.

The reason for this curious fact is partly to be found in the customary mode of reading the Bible. We seldom read it in large stretches, a book or a group of books at a time. We usually know it only in chapters, or even in verses. The wide sweep of its thought and the development of its purpose traced through age after age and transition after transition, are either left out of account altogether or are considered only by devout students whose critical and historical methods invest their conclusions with an antiquated and paradoxical air.

To support the missionary enterprise by the quotation of certain proof-texts is quite inadequate. When we are fumbling among these texts we are in the position of one who cannot see the wood

for the trees. The texts appear to be unrelated axioms, and if a suspicion is cast upon the correctness or the genuineness of a text, the authority for missions seems to melt away. Thus it is well known that the great commission at the end of St Matthew's Gospel, "Go ye into all the world," etc., has been questioned, because it does not occur in the three other gospels, and is not referred to elsewhere in the New Testament; and, as Warneck pointedly observes, we have the curious spectacle of scholars disputing the authenticity of the command at the very period when the Church is waking up to give it a vigorous effect. It is to be feared that some people's mode of conceiving Scripture is so mechanical and unspiritual, that to lose that single text would mean to them a blow to the authority of missions. But this is just as if a wanderer from some remote island were to find a vehicle upon a continental road, and were to argue for

its intended use entirely from an examination of the wheels. Confining his attention to this one point, he would find his argument paralysed by the suggestion that the vehicle might be suspended in the air, and the rotation of the wheels might be used for moving, not it, but something else. His scepticism could only be removed, and his argument could only be established, when he took a more comprehensive view of the whole machine: when he observed that there were springs to make the carriage easy on its axles, seats to accommodate passengers, shafts for the horse, and a box for the driver. Then from the whole construction arguing that this was a vehicle, he would prove that the wheels were meant to move it, and would from the wheels gain conclusive evidence of its vehicular nature. Now, the proof-texts which are quoted in support of missions are only the wheels on which the Christian revelation moves. To confine our attention

to them is to render the argument ineffective, and to leave it open to criticism and even to refutation. The whole message of the Bible is the vehicle; its body and structure, when comprehensively viewed, are so unmistakable that the proof-texts are corollaries from it, and though it may seem to rest on them, the juster view is that they are derived from it. We do not show that it is a vehicle intended to travel because it has wheels, but we point out that it has wheels because it is clearly, from top to bottom, and from end to end, a vehicle intended to travel. Thus, for example, if the famous text were not at the end of the first gospel, we should have to put it there; it is the plain and inevitable deduction from the gospel itself. We are thankful indeed that it is written in the first gospel and in the oldest MSS., that it is as authentic as any writing on paper or parchment can be, and that criticism can no more remove it from us than it can pluck the sun out

of the heavens or silence the soft whisper of the summer leaves; but if it were not there we should still know from the study of the New Testament that the Gospel was bound to be carried to every nation and to every human soul, that the baptism in the name of Jesus was to involve the teaching of all His commandments, and that His invisible help and irresistible power were guaranteed to His followers and to His witnesses every day until the work should be accomplished.

The first thought, then, is not to enter into a minute examination of certain texts or passages, which may easily be collected from all parts of Scripture, but rather to stand off a little and endeavour to gain a conception of Scripture as a whole, to ask ourselves the question, What is the bearing and the trend of this book? Before we enter the wood and examine its several kinds of trees, and acquaint ourselves with its shy or tuneful inhabitants, let us try to see how

it lies along the valley, how it climbs the hillside, and how it surmounts the ridge. Before we loiter on the high-road, pluck the flowers by the way, or lift a stone to guess through what formation we are travelling, or even bivouac for a rest, let us take a map and see whither the road is going, how it holds its sinuous way over hill and dale, across the streams and through the hamlets, and finally reaches the city of God. For, undoubtedly, no one can miss the missionary teaching of the Bible who knows what the Bible is, and while many ignore or try to ignore the Bible altogether, there are some who never come to the knowledge of it or receive the full impact of its teaching because, being too much tangled in its details, they have come to regard it as a somewhat confused jumble of oracular texts, from which the theologian selects what he requires to construct his dogmatic system, and the moralist quotes what he likes to support his ethical

teaching. The purpose of the following pages may therefore be thus described: we desire to see the Bible in its natural light, to understand the relation of its parts, and the growth through many centuries of its idea; we wish to see it as it is imbedded in the life of mankind, and as it is related to the religious conceptions and aspirations of man. In making such a survey we expect to discover and to clearly grasp the truth that, as the book is the authentic and variegated record of the way in which God has gradually, but surely, revealed Himself to the human race, so it is the great and unchangeable means by which that revelation is to cover the whole world, and bring all men to the full clear knowledge of God.

Though through long usage we cannot but think of the Bible as a single book, it is very necessary in this connection to remember that there is a gap between the Old Testament and the New, and that the New comes in real

order before the Old. There is a Bible published in recent years which prints the New Testament first, and adds the Old as a long appendix, which is valuable for casting light upon the main theme of the book. And this is the order which must be adopted, not only in every attempt to appreciate the missionary character of the Bible, but also in presenting the Bible to the world as a missionary book. We can hardly expect people emerging from heathendom to make much of the Bible as we print it. Christ sent the apostles, not with the old law nor even with the old prophets, but with a glad new message to reach and to save mankind. He did not put in the forefront of His gospel the creation story, nor even the story of Adam and the Fall, to which he never alludes. And it will be a dead weight on the progress of the Gospel among Hindus, Chinese, and Japanese, who are beginning to receive the results of Western science, if we attempt to win

them to Christ by presenting to them first the Book of Genesis. It is true that passages of the Old Testament have sometimes appealed to souls in heathen darkness, and been the introduction to gospel light; Joseph Neesima, for example, the most remarkable Christian that Japan has at present produced, was first arrested by the opening words of Genesis. Brought up in the Japanese view of the origin of things, which is essentially the same as Herbert Spencer's cheerless philosophy, Neesima felt that a new hope had dawned upon him with the bare thought that there is a personal intelligence as the origin or Author of the world: though it was only the subsequent study of St John's Gospel during his voyage to America that led to his conversion. And long before, when Europe itself lay in heathendom, we are told how the cultivated lawyer Cyprianus was converted by hearing a sermon on Jonah, though probably a sermon on Jonah

spoke more of Christ than of the prophet. But Mr Chatterjee, speaking as a converted Brahmin to English audiences, has described to us his confusion of mind when, in his search for truth, he was first directed to the Bible: he read the stories of the Book of Genesis and thought them not unlike his Hindu mythology. Mistaking the patriarchs for gods or avatars, he did not perceive the superiority of these narratives to much that he had learnt from the Vedas; and at that time he turned aside from the Scriptures with a feeling that they contained nothing for him.

Although, then, the New Testament is vitally connected with the Old, as we shall presently see, we must begin with the New Testament and study it independently and without prejudice, if we are ever to understand how the Bible is a missionary book, or to commend its missionary message to the world. The Old Testament is only

missionary in the sense, that it issues in the New; it is the literature of a people which was, and is, racially and religiously, the most persistently exclusive people that the world has ever seen. The Old Testament in itself has never had a missionary message to the world. The Jews, so far from wishing to disseminate it, have jealously claimed it as their peculiar possession; they have proudly denounced the people who knew not their law as accursed, but they have never, except for a brief period just before the dawn of Christianity, attempted to remove the curse from the Gentiles, by preaching to them the law. Is there anything at the present moment more inconceivable than that the wealthy and pious Jews of England should organise a mission to give the Old Testament to the Chinese, and to bring in to the Covenant of the Lord, according to the prophecy of Isaiah, those from the land of Sinim? The Old Testament is only a mission-

ary book in the sense that it represents a race, a religious institution, and a great expectation, as the necessary preparation for the event which constitutes a missionary message to mankind. Painful as it sounds to Jewish ears, it is yet historically true that the Old Testament has no significance for the human race, except in so far as it has issued in the New. Take away the New Testament, suppose that Christ had not come, and Judaism would be a *caput mortuum*, the Old Testament a literary curiosity. A coral atoll in the Pacific rises to the surface, and supports the dwellings of men on vast submerged formations, built up by the labours of the coral insects. Those hidden foundations have their value, but they are no dwelling-place for man; if he were to attempt to dwell in them he would be drowned. Now, the New Testament is like that fruitful island clothed with the palms and girt with the protective reefs which

rests upon the deep substructures of the Jewish race, the Jewish religion, and the Jewish hope; man does not and cannot dwell in those substructures, but on that beautiful and protected island he dwells securely surrounded by the stormy seas. Our first business then is to gain a clear and independent view of the New Testament, its contents and implications, its impulses and movements, and the way in which it has worked, and must always work in the world.

But when the truths, ideas, and forces of the New Testament are properly understood, it is a most valuable help to go back to the Old, and to realise how the great missionary message of Christianity strikes its roots deep into that religion which of all others seems at first sight to be the most exclusive; for nothing so confirms the long design of God, as to observe a development conducted through many ages with an infallible precision to a

predicted end. Israel existed to produce Christ, as the bulb exists to produce the hyacinth. We can never sufficiently admire the unlovely and scentless convolutions and the colourless fibres out of which has sprung the bright consummate flower. Who could guess from an examination of the bulb that it contained within it the possibility of such fragrance and beauty, yet who can see and smell the flower without recognising that we owe it to that unpromising root?

Now, in the retrospective study of the Old Testament, if we are rightly to understand the missionary truths and impulses which found their expression and power of expansion in Christianity, we are obliged to recast the order of the literature, or at least to bear clearly in mind the mode in which it ought to be arranged. The Old Testament has many difficulties incident to its variety, its antiquity, and the obscurity which rests on ancient documents, preserved

rather by the tenacity of tradition than by the light of intelligence; but there is a difficulty which might, and which may, be removed: the editorial work which fixed it in its present form before the Christian era may be revised and considerably improved. For nearly a century scholars have laboured at this editorial task; and the results already achieved give to the literature a true perspective, and a vitality which it had lost under the cramping influence of tradition. And the sense in which the older religion was the preparation for the new, and contained in itself the missionary forces which were liberated and set at work by Christianity, appears to us in a new and a clearer light.

For the purposes of our study, it is necessary to realise that in the Old Testament there are separate, though frequently intermingling streams, which finally converge in the Christian revelation. The four streams run side by side, and the arrangement of the books

gives us but a confused impression of their relation to one another. The streams are the *Law*, the *History*, the *Prophets*, and the *Miscellaneous Works* comprising stories, poems, and sayings of the wise. Each one of these covers the whole tract of time from the origin to the full development of Judaism; each one of these presents a growing anticipation of Christianity; and each one of these, by blending more or less with the others, contributes those great elements of world-wide significance which only waited for Christ to come, to appear, as indeed they were, God's long predictions of His purpose to save the world.

A very brief sketch will at this point suffice to show the lines on which study must proceed. The Bible of Judaism, at the dawn of Christianity was *par excellence* the *Law*; the rest of the Scriptures held a secondary position, and were by some sects not recognised as Holy Scripture at all. The first point

therefore is to realise that the *Pentateuch*, or *Law of Moses*, covers the whole period from the beginning to the final development of Judaism, and Christianity attaches itself to the *Law* as closely as Joshua, the Jesus of the Old Testament, is attached to the *Pentateuch*. We have, in a word, to get rid of the illusion that the rest of the Old Testament writings are interposed between the Law and Christ, and to see how literally the Law is a schoolmaster that brings us to Christ. The next point is to see how the History runs parallel to the Law. The historical stream, up to the time of the conquest of Canaan, runs actually through the *Pentateuch*; but when our eyes are opened to see it, it is no less clear that the remaining part of the stream from Joshua to Ezra runs through the *Pentateuch* too, and the historic changes of the people are reflected in the national law. The sacred community or theocracy in which the History issues is that Judaism of the post-exile period

which, with limited territory and concentrated cultus, under a high priest but without a king, a Church rather than a nation, waited anxiously for a deliverer and for a Saviour. In the third place, the *Prophets* run parallel with the other streams, shaping the History and developing the Law. Now as statesmen like Moses, or Samuel, or Isaiah, now as teachers like Elijah, or Amos, or Micah, now as priests like Jeremiah or Ezekiel, they were the most vital element in the national development; and as they made Israel, under the inspiration of God, so they inevitably and in manifold ways, and under varied figures, forecast that Christ, and that Christianity, whose forerunner and preparation Israel, in all his experiences and institutions, was. Lastly, the Miscellaneous Writings belong to all periods of the national history, though naturally the stream increases in bulk the farther we come down. The *Psalter* or hymn-book of Israel contains poems which were at-

tributed to Moses or to David, many more which belong to the period of the Captivity, and some even which seem to have sprung from the time of the Maccabees. This devotional literature is so burdened with the longings and forecastings of souls that are moved by the Spirit of God, that in many parts it seems to transcend the time and the circumstances of its composition, and to arrive manifestly in the new day of missionary expansion which was to begin with Christ. The stories, like those of Elijah or Elisha inserted in the history book, or like those of Daniel and Jonah occurring in the prophetic books, or those of Ruth, Esther, and Job standing by themselves, have very varied relations to the history and literature of Israel; but, strange to say, they all, or almost all, have a special bearing, as we shall see, on the Christian revelation. And the *Wisdom literature*, as it is called, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Job, especially if we

may include the extra-canonical works of the same order, the Book of Wisdom and Ecclesiasticus, though little related to the Law, and only nominally connected with the History and with the Prophets, run in a very full volume towards Christ; and thus the wisdom of the nation seemed to foretell Him whom the nation itself, in its folly, rejected.

This concise sketch will serve sufficiently to indicate the course which we must take to understand the missionary quality of the Bible.

# THE BURDEN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

# CHAPTER II

## THE BURDEN OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

It may have happened to the reader in a favourable moment, looking on a sunny landscape, to take Nature by surprise and to perceive what a miracle it is that the heavy and lifeless crust of the globe is mantled in verdure, threaded by babbling streams, shaded with woodlands, musical with birds, and vital with the myriad forms of life. In such a moment of surprise the veil which custom weaves is rent, and you see things in their right relation and in their astonishing significance; for indeed the miracle of miracles is just that simple order which unawakened minds take for granted, and to the reality of which it is the sole object of science in her researches, and of literature and art in their imaginations, to awaken the mind.

Now, it must be our purpose in some such way as this to take the New Testament by surprise, and to come upon it with the fresh wonder which it would excite, if our minds had not been dulled by long familiarity, and if our hearts had not lain in the stupid lethargy of sin. It is the object of all biblical scholarship and of all devout study to thus rediscover the New Testament, see its real bearings and feel its immense significance.

Now, let us, uplifting our hearts to God for illumination, look afresh at the New Testament, as it deploys before our eyes. As we open the book, we see at once that it is concerned with a message and with a Man. At first the Man delivers the message, but more and more He becomes Himself an essential part of it, until when His brief earthly course is over, the message has become so identified with the Man, that it is the task of all who knew Him to proclaim the Man as the message.

Now, whether we examine the message or the Man, we are led to this one result, that from the first they both appeal to humanity as a whole, and to a particular people, or to chosen individuals, only as the instruments by which the world-wide appeal can be made effectual.

The message in its briefest form runs: "The kingdom of God is at hand." Look at that phrase with fresh eyes, unencumbered by any explanations except what the New Testament contains, and you can hardly fail to catch its meaning. God is King, and all men are His subjects, so that they can find no happiness or worth except in complete obedience to His will; and thus their prayer must daily be, that His rights may be acknowledged, His sovereignty accepted, and His purpose realised in every detail of the world's life. As Ruskin in his prophetic way nobly said, "No one can offer the daily prayer, 'Thy kingdom come,' without

doing more than praying." To pray that the kingdom may come, implies that we set about to realise it, first in ourselves, then in society, and ultimately in all the earth. If only our eyes were open, if only the deadening weight of custom were removed, we should see that we can never utter the Lord's Prayer without committing ourselves to the whole missionary enterprise, nay, perhaps that every paternoster offered, apart from the definite and constant desire to make known the good news of the kingdom to all the world, recoils on the lips that utter it and convicts them of insincerity; for who can say "Our Father" without saying that all men are His children, and who can say "Thy kingdom come" without acknowledging the loyal subject's obligation to bring the disloyal back to their allegiance?

Then look at the parables of the kingdom, and realise how unintelligible they would be if they were addressed to a section or to a nation, and not to

the whole of mankind. The field for the sowing is nothing short of the world, the leaven works in the meal till the whole is leavened, and in the final scene all nations are gathered before the Son of Man. If there are parables, like that of the labourers in the vineyard, or the prodigal son, which are particularly directed to the Jewish people, the object is only to cancel that exclusiveness and to show that the message is not for them but for the world.

When these marks of the kingdom in the *Synoptic Gospels* have been duly examined, it is well to turn to the Fourth Gospel, where the designation "Kingdom of God" is but sparingly used, to observe how firmly the world-wide application of the message is retained. Here a writer is looking back upon the surprising entrance of the great Light from heaven, and how obvious it is to him that "this is the Light that lighteth every man coming into the world," that this is "the Lamb

of God that taketh away the sin of the world," that "God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son." With what an inclusive phrase he is determined to show that "whoever receiveth," or that "whosoever believeth," shall enter into the privileges of the kingdom. If for the term "kingdom of heaven" the more inward phrase, "eternal life," is substituted, that is only because outside the theocratic circles and the Messianic expectations of Judaism, the term king had a sinister sound; the empire dominated by Nero or Domitian, or for the matter of that, by Trajan or Marcus Aurelius, was not world-wide enough or spiritual enough to serve as an image, and the phrase "whosoever will," or the somewhat ambiguous term "the world," must be employed, to maintain the Master's original intention of showing that His message was directed to mankind.

And what is implied in the substance of the message is no less implied in the

Man who delivered it, and in the titles which He assumed or accepted. His personal name is not allowed to be without significance, He was called Jesus because He should save. The title Messias or, in the Greek, Christ, He was chary of assuming: He put it off, as it were, as long as possible to make sure that it was not taken in the current acceptation. He would not be called Messias while that might be supposed to make Him the peculiar property of the Jews; He waited to be called Christ until that name should have shaken off all suggestion of Judaism. Even the most careless reader of the three first gospels must be struck by this attitude assumed towards the nation to which He belongs. On the one hand, He admits that He is a Jew, and that His immediate personal mission is exclusively to the house of Israel; but on the other hand, He repudiates all the presuppositions of the Jews concerning Him, and is finally rejected and

executed by them, because He announces the dissolution of their whole religious system in favour of a law, and of a worship, which can embrace all mankind. Accordingly the designation which He chooses for Himself is not that of Messiah, with its ambiguous suggestions, nor even that of Son of God, which was implied whenever He spoke of "My Father," but a title which causes fresh astonishment to every student of the gospels to-day, namely, the Son of Man. Allow all the interpretations of this phrase which scholarship and ingenuity have suggested; admit that it was a covert term for the Messias borrowed from the Book of Daniel or the Book of Enoch; or grant, with more recent scholarship, that Son of Man is an Aramaic idiom for man pure and simple; yet no unsophisticated reader coming to the gospels afresh and finding that the deliverer of the message chooses to describe Himself as man, or as the Son of Man, can fail to discern

the implication that the speaker is delivering His message to man as such, and assumes as his herald's livery the marks not of a nation or of a race, but of that humanity to which He wishes to appeal. No one then can listen to Jesus speaking in the gospels, and least of all when He is speaking about Himself, without being overwhelmed by the universality of His invitations. He will not let the people make Him a King, because He understands by kingship not what they mean, but a witness to universal truth or an exercise of a comprehensive love; He is afraid of the allegiance of a nation or of a Church which might seem to preclude the allegiance of humanity. The reader of the gospels involuntarily forms a picture of Him which for ever abides; he sees Him as the great northern sculptor Thorwaldsen conceived Him; he sets Him in the dim apse of the Church opening wide arms; he feels Him in the open spaces of the world, nay, as

a vast supernatural figure raised on a mountain, which commands the observation of mankind, uttering the words, which may be proclaimed wherever there are human ears to hear or human hearts to understand, "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Thus it is impossible to contemplate the Person who delivers the message without perceiving how He becomes the message itself, and as the message by its very nature is addressed to mankind as such, so He who delivers it, by His titles, by His character, by all He said and all He did, makes an irresistible claim on man as man. One cannot help putting into His lips the words, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto Me." No nation can receive Him without immediately perceiving that every other nation has an equal need and an equal claim; no human lips can declare who the Son of Man is, without at the same time acknowledging the responsibility to

tell everyone else who does not know; no human heart dare or can say "Jesus is mine" without the astonishing discovery that He is equally everyone else's, and that to sit down contentedly under His shadow to enjoy Him, and not to extend the range of His influence and of His joy by imparting Him, is as if those lepers at the gate of Samaria, when the great deliverance came, had remained at a revel in the deserted tents, instead of taking the good news to the famished city.[1]

But the question might be raised, will not the kingdom of God establish itself and develope, like the great

[1] In that wonderful book, *Pastor Hsi*, we hear of an old Chinese woman who shrank from baptism, though she was clearly a believer; she gave it as the reason that she could not be a Christian, that to be a Christian meant to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; and though she spoke of Christ to all she could, she was too old to go into all the world. What a joy it must have been to explain to that fervent soul, and then to receive her into the fold. She had rightly understood the meaning of Christianity and the Gospel.

natural forces, without human intervention? Do not even the favourite parables of the seed, and the harvest, and the tree, imply that the growth proceeds of itself? Is it not therefore a conceivable view, that we are to stand by and see the salvation of the Lord? Was there not a justification for the severe rebuke of that worthy divine who checked the missionary zeal of William Carey by saying, "Young man, when the Lord wishes to convert the heathen He will do it without you?" Now, this question is immediately answered, and all doubt is precluded, by taking another broad view of the New Testament and its teaching. For not only was the great message brought by the great Messenger, who waited for the fulness of time till He could come; and not only did He proceed to proclaim it in a thoroughly human way, beginning at Jerusalem and aiming in His lifetime only at the narrow confines of the Holy Land; but He immediately made it

plain that the message was to extend by means of other human messengers, and that whatever divine power might work with them, the message would not be delivered without them; that, in a word, though the seed might grow of itself, it must be scattered by sowers, and though the word might be the means of divine regeneration, it must be uttered by human lips. Just as surely as the message was destined for all mankind, just as surely as the kingdom of God must ultimately prevail, so surely was the principle laid down from the beginning, that human agents must voluntarily accept the responsibility of widening the borders of the kingdom, and of making themselves the mouthpieces of the message. The kingdom of God in humanity will only come by human agency, and however we may fret and criticise and rebel, the divine decree has manifestly gone forth, that men will not hear the glad tidings unless there be preachers, and that

preachers cannot deliver it unless they be sent.

Accordingly the first thought of Christ was to gather about Him a group of men who would act as messengers. The word "apostle" means one who is sent as a messenger, and apostolic succession can only mean the transmission of the messenger's duty from generation to generation, until all have heard. The chief work of the Lord's ministry was to train His company of messengers. He sent out the twelve, two by two, and, according to St Luke, He subsequently sent out seventy more in the same way, to drill them in the permanent method of His work; they were to go preaching the kingdom, healing and saving wherever He Himself should come, and as He designed eventually to go into all the world, they were to go into all the world. He knew that the work would take time and that many more messengers would be needed; He told them that a great harvest was

waiting—it was the harvest of all the world; and He taught them to pray, that the Lord of the harvest, the King in heaven, would send out sufficient labourers. So far from encouraging the idea that the Gospel would preach itself, and that the kingdom would come without human effort, He made His followers responsible not only for strenuously doing their own part, but also for seeking from heaven the legions of workers that would be necessary for the conquest of the world.

We are familiar with the fact, we take it for granted, but it is a most startling feature of the New Testament that Christ writes no book, publishes no code, issues no directions, but confines Himself entirely to proclaiming and exhibiting in His own person the kingdom of God, then leaving to His disciples, and to those who should believe in Him through their word, the task of proclaiming, and exhibiting in their persons, Him, as the embodiment of the kingdom, to

all the world. *The Gospel not only contains the missionary idea, but it is the missionary idea and nothing else.* It scrupulously avoids being anything else, and gets rid of all encumbrances; it has no laboured law or exacting code, no stereotyped system or ecclesiastical institutions, no ceremonial or priest or temple—all these are accretions or excrescences—but it is simply and austerely a voice, a voice crying in the wilderness, a voice from heaven, a voice which invites every human soul into the kingdom of God, and adds, "let him that heareth say come."

Accordingly when we have traversed the four gospels, we are, in the New Testament, confronted with a most amazing spectacle, Christ the Messenger from heaven has been contumeliously crucified: the little company of His trained followers, who had "thought it should have been He who should deliver Israel," must surely be overwhelmed with disappointment and shame, and

must return to their humble and inglorious callings. They were unlearned and ignorant men, without wealth or influence or numbers, without genius or even talent, knowing little or nothing of the wide world, they were despised and rejected in the narrow national circles to which they belonged. But the amazing fact is that these obscure and discouraged men, immediately and by an irresistible impulse, constituted themselves messengers to the world. Beginning from Jerusalem, where they happened to be, they struck out in all directions; harassed by the constituted authorities, they accepted persecution as a goad for extending their work; each place that was occupied became at once a missionary centre, each person who believed was in one form or another a missionary. Within twenty years of Christ's death the great Syrian city of Antioch, the scene of the unspeakable pollutions of the Daphneum, was the starting-point for a deliberate and systematic attempt to carry the message

throughout Asia Minor and the islands of the Ægean; and the dauntless missionaries who undertook the task were summoned over to Macedonia and Greece, preaching the good news; and from that peninsula they caught sight of Italy and of Rome, and directly Rome was in sight, formed plans to get beyond to Spain and the Pillars of Hercules.

And here a most remarkable feature of the New Testament literature comes into view, a feature which was brought into relief and over-emphasised by Baur and his school: we are the witnesses of a sharp conflict between those who took a narrower, and those who took the largest possible view of the purport of the message. Some of the apostles, limited by their Jewish training, and misunderstanding Christ's own reverence for the Jewish law, could not get beyond the idea that the message was for Jews alone, and that if the Gentiles were to receive it they must first become Jews. The Acts of the Apostles designedly or

undesignedly shows how this limitation was transcended. Little by little the Jewish Christians opened their hearts and their minds, and learned to anticipate the fateful event of the year 70, when the Jewish institutions were brought to an abrupt end by the final destruction of the temple. But the main instrument in securing this enlargement of view was the Apostle Paul, who, having been the most rigid and bigoted observer of the Jewish law, received Christ not only as the deliverer from sin, but more particularly as the deliverer from the Law. In the enthusiasm of this great emancipation, possessing a native genius and a fulness of learning such as none of the earlier disciples possessed, Paul seemed to be the chosen vessel to direct the missionary impulse of Christianity to all mankind and to leave behind a little group of writings to form the pith of the New Testament, which would identify the Gospel and missionary enterprise until, by the triumph of the Gospel, mis-

sionary enterprise should be no more needed.

It must ever be a matter of surprise how Luther and Calvin, and the other reformers, can have spent so much labour on St Paul's epistles, and have got so much truth out of them, without observing their missionary import. Finding in them the doctrine of justification by faith, and using them as the unfailing weapon against Rome, they seemed to have no eye for the general indications of these immortal letters. For observe, the writings of St Paul are nothing else but the letters of a missionary, evoked by his missionary work, necessitated by the fact that his missionary stations were so numerous and so widely scattered, that he could be in them only as an occasional visitor. If St Paul had not been a missionary, but had settled down in some comfortable benefice, to rejoice in the fact that the group of believers he had gathered around him were the peculiar people

of God, we should have had no Pauline epistles at all. How can even the dullest reader touch these burning words; how can even the most dry-as-dust theologian weld his system with these molten arguments; how can any Christian seek salvation, confirm his faith, or establish his hope by grasping the mighty truths which ferment in the apostle's mind, without recognising that the whole motive, and design, and texture are missionary, and that no one has a right to share in the truths and privileges which St Paul unfolds to his readers, who is not fired by the missionary zeal which glows in the writer's heart? He writes to the Galatians, because in his missionary journeys he had gathered these converts out of heathendom; and then unscrupulous Judaisers had followed in his track, to persuade them that, in order to be Christians, they must also become Jews. To the Thessalonians or the Corinthians he writes, because

in his rapid missionary course he has had to leave young converts not fully instructed; to the Romans he writes as a missionary who longs to visit them, but is determined to send them of his best, if he may not come himself. To the Philippians he pours out his heart, because, the first of his converts in Europe, they have been the most untiring supporters of his missionary progress. The kindred letters, Colossians and Ephesians, are written when the missionary's course is arrested; and in the irksome restraint of a prison, he seeks to deepen and consolidate the truths which he has taught. Even his letters to friends bear the same impress. The briefest of them all is the most missionary, for the Epistle to Philemon contains the truth, revolutionary to the ancient world, that not only Gentiles and barbarians, but mere slaves, whom Aristotle regarded rather as implements than as men, could be admitted into the kingdom of God. Finally, the letters to Timothy and Titus give us

an unexpected glimpse into a period of Paul's life, upon which history is silent; and we find him there again in prison, and under the very shadow of death, exhorting and guiding two of his missionary lieutenants, on whom the work must fall when he had quitted the field.

Thus, it is not that St Paul gives occasional incitements or directions for missionary work; it is not that here or there in his letters we find him arguing that the message comes to Gentile as well as to Jew, or that "God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth"; it is not that we see him now and again selecting and despatching missionary agents, Barnabas, Silas, Epaphras, Mark, or Timothy, that justifies us in claiming for this part of the New Testament a missionary character, but these letters are missionary productions through and through, and have no significance apart from that characteristic. Livingstone might be regarded as an explorer no

less than a missionary, Mackay as an engineer, Hannington as a prelate, but Paul is nothing save a missionary, his writings know no other subject, his heart is occupied with no other wish, but to make Christ known where He was not known before. Theologians, in trying to construct systems out of his letters, have largely wasted their time; ecclesiastics who would have him as an authority for their pretensions, are put to constant confusion; his business is not to construct a theology or to organise a hierarchy, but to carry Christ into regions beyond. His theological arguments or his church arrangements are produced incidentally, and lay claim to no finality; the one constant and permanent element of his thought and work is the missionary passion; the love of Christ constrains him, woe is to him if he preaches not the Gospel, he is determined to know nothing else but Christ, and Christ crucified, and never to rest till all men know. What an irony it is that theologians handle

these letters, that ecclesiastics cite them, that individual believers build upon them, and yet that only a few are aware of their main burden, and the reason of their existence, which is to carry on the expansion of the missionary work until there is no country where Christ is not preached, and no human being to whom His salvation is not offered.

The remaining epistles of the New Testament do not carry the missionary impress so distinctly as the Pauline writings, but a little reflection reveals that on most of them at any rate it is sufficiently clear. That eloquent and inspiring work, more like a great sermon than a letter, the Epistle to the Hebrews, is the living clamp which holds together the Old Testament and the New. Its object is to show that the great institutions of the Law were symbolical, and that the truth which they foreshadowed had at last been revealed. The temple and the priests, the altar and the sacrifices, the veil and the Holy of Holies had entered on a

world-wide meaning. They were, in a word, fulfilled all of them and completed in the sole Person of Christ, they were not lost, rather they were for the first time found. The Jew had kept them all until they could be given to the world. Now they were given to the world. What they had been to the Jew in the long ages of preparation, they were now to be to the world in the longer ages of realisation; the shadow had passed, that the substance might stand. The holy enthusiasm, which glows in every page, is due to the fact that, at last, the whole world has come to Zion, and the General Assembly and Church of the first-born is established, in the revelation of the Son. Thus if the thought of the Judaisers in the primitive Church was that the Gentiles must first become Jews in order to become Christians, this inspired writing teaches that the Gentiles were to become Christians in order to become Jews. The writer appeals to Hebrews, he shares their passionate attachment to

the law and its institutions; he will not lose one jot or one tittle; every detail is sacred, every injunction is permanent, but it has all blossomed like Aaron's rod, it is all transformed, it is all spiritual, and therefore eternal, "Yes," he seems to exclaim exultingly, "all mankind shall obey the Law, and shall be gathered into the Sacred Covenant of Judaism." For that reason the temple shall disappear and be replaced by the exalted body of Christ; for that reason earthly priests shall vanish, and He shall be the world's sole Priest, abiding for ever after the order of Melchizedek; for that reason the altar and the sacrifices shall pass away, and He shall be the sacrifice offered once for all through the Eternal Spirit. The book therefore accomplishes the astonishing transformation of turning Judaism, which seemed the narrowest and most exclusive of cults, into the religion which was meant for, and would reach the whole world.

The first letter which comes to us under the name of Peter is a curious

witness to the reconciliation accomplished in the apostolic times, between the narrower views of the first apostles and the broader conception which was most vehemently advocated by St Paul; indeed the only reason for questioning the authorship of Peter is, that the letter is in all its main features so strikingly Pauline. Paul once resisted Peter to the face, but this letter implies that their reconciliation was complete, and that Peter made an unconditional surrender to the mighty thought of the great missionary Paul. And thus the address of his letter bears testimony to the missionary progress which was the most striking feature of the apostolic Church. It is written not to an individual, nor even to a community, but to a dispersion. These apostolic writers address themselves to countries and to continents, and indeed to the world. From the standpoint of a Jew, Asia Minor was as distant and as strange as the American Continent or Australasia is to us, and yet this simple

Galilean fisherman, now become a fisher of men, and entered upon the task to which the Lord had called him, writes these words of encouragement under persecution, based on the sufferings of his Lord to "the elect who are sojourners in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (1 Peter i. 1).

The Epistle of St James has just the same striking characteristic. It is, in its substance, a brief homily, based principally upon recollections of the teaching of Jesus, and is a practical exhortation to faith and good works, and especially to prayer. It offers no indications of a particular missionary intention. But none the less, it is a testimony to the missionary expansion of the apostolic age, because it is addressed to "the twelve tribes scattered abroad," that is, to the Jews who apparently in whole synagogues had become Christians, to be found now in all parts of the world to which a letter could come.

When it is remembered that Peter was the slowest of the apostles to grasp

the world-wide intention of the Gospel, and that James both in the Acts and in tradition is a Jew so scrupulous as to be admirable even to Jewish orthodoxy, it is the more impressive to observe that these two appear in their letters as witnesses of the inevitable expansion of the Christian message.

The two letters, 2 Peter and Jude, are, it is true, devoid of any missionary indications; but, curious to say, these are the two books of the New Testament about which there has been most hesitation and difficulty. And though there is no need to surrender them, and no question of excluding them from the Christian canon, it is certainly significant that their place in the New Testament has been questioned, perhaps because there is wanting in them that missionary passion which gives its note to the New Testament.

The three epistles of St John are rich in missionary significance; this is the part of the New Testament which seems like a lofty hill, far removed from

the circumstances and details of the revelation in history. The writer must be a Jew, his very Greek is Hebraic in style and structure, but he has got rid of all Jewish particularism; he sees the truth of Christianity no longer in relation to the Judaism out of which it sprang, but only in relation to the world for which it had come. He writes, that men may believe in the Great Truth which was meant for men; there are no limitations, there is no possibility of limitation. There is the world that lies in darkness, the whole world; there is God, who is light; we have only to do with God and the world. And there is Christ, who has come out of God's light into the world's darkness; the light has overcome the world and, as the world enters into that light,—one by one it is true, nation by nation, it may be, but at the last, the whole world—it is saved. From this lofty standpoint of ideas there can be no question about the missionary bearing of the Gospel. When one speaks of God and the world,

and sets them over against one another; and when one says that 'God is love,' and loves the world; and when one announces the supreme fact in history that that love has sought and found the world in the Person of the only-begotten Son; it is impossible to dwell in any particularism of view, the love that is manifested to all, must be conveyed to each. Light is not more diffusive than the Gospel as it appears in these epistles; light will go everywhere, its only enemy is darkness, and it is constantly engaged in overcoming its enemy. The Gospel will go everywhere, like the beams of the sun which irradiate the world; and it cannot rest or halt, until "all the nations that sit in darkness have seen the great light."

Whatever may be its date, the Revelation of John the Divine comes very appropriately at the close of the New Testament. It owes its place there to the fact that its authenticity and canonicity were long disputed; and it is conceivable that it was actually written

before any of the gospels, and not long after the letters of St Paul: we should not therefore be surprised if it showed signs of the earlier and less inclusive conceptions of the Christian Gospel; and we must not be offended if it bears traces of the passion and the terror, the indignation and resentment which were aroused when persecution broke out and the power of the Roman Empire was exerted to destroy the saints. But the book stands appropriately at the end of the New Testament, because in a striking way it echoes and confirms the two main ideas of the Gospel with which the New Testament opens. The message and the Person that appear in St Matthew like the clear coming of the dawn, appear in the Apocalypse like the gorgeous pageant of a stormy sunset. There is the Person announcing Himself as the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, issuing His messages to the several churches of His faithful, or unfaithful, disciples; there He is, as the Lamb that had been slain,

there He is as the living Word; He is now on the throne triumphant, and all the voices of the universe are acclaiming Him as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. And there is the Kingdom of God now nearing its fulfilment; the great powers of the earth are shaken and humbled, and the stars are fallen from heaven, the Roman Empire, like a wild beast, is stricken as unto death, and the city of its abominations is giving place to the city that descends from heaven. The kingdoms of this world are becoming the kingdoms of the Lord and of His Christ. And though the confusion of the battle, and the terror of the torments of the vanquished and the smoke and the fire from the pit fill the book with a certain lurid gloom, there is no mistaking the main purport of it all; the everlasting Gospel has been proclaimed through the heavens and has compassed the earth; the purpose for which Christ came is accomplished; all kindreds and tribes and tongues hail Him as Lord,

every knee is bowed and every tongue confesses.

It will thus be seen that, taking the New Testament as a whole and following the main sweep of its ideas, we find its missionary teaching, not in occasional texts or exceptional passages, but in its very structure and texture. So unmistakable is this missionary motive, this missionary burden, this missionary work, that practically all writings that were defective in this quality have been unconsciously excluded from the Canon. The principle of criticism by which the Canon was formed might well have been: Does this book bear with sufficient distinctness the missionary impress? That two brief documents bearing apostolic names, 2 Peter and Jude, should have maintained their place in the compilation without this distinctive quality is hardly worth mentioning, especially as, taken in connection with their surrounding books, they are not without a missionary significance, being warnings and denunciations against the

powers of evil which neutralise the victorious progress of the Gospel. But otherwise every part of the New Testament, from the first page to the last, is the outcome of that missionary impulse which came from the heart of God in the Person of His Son, to reach and to save the world which He loved. Rightly considered, you might as well try to estimate Beethoven, excluding music from the study, as to estimate the New Testament, excluding the missionary idea. Leave out that missionary idea, read and study the book without the zeal and enthusiasm of the eager conquest of the world in the name of Christ, and all becomes dark and confused; but take that missionary idea, frankly recognise that you are handling a missionary book, a book which is brief and compact, unencumbered, as a missionary bent on travel and conquest should be, and all its pages become luminous, its several parts fall into their places, and even some of its greatest difficulties solve themselves.

# HOW THE LAW LEADS UP TO THE GOSPEL

# CHAPTER III

## HOW THE LAW LEADS UP TO THE GOSPEL

WHEN we have by careful and detailed study securely established the missionary character of the New Testament, and apprehended its unique significance for mankind as the saving message which comes from God to the world, to be communicated by those who believe to ever-widening circles until it covers the earth, we are then in a position to turn our attention to the Old Testament, which was the preparation for the New, and to trace in it the fourfold root, which the Gospel strikes into the past, the *Law*, the *History*, the *Prophets*, and the *Miscellaneous Writings*.

We are not to expect in examining the Old Testament to find it a mission-

ary book like the New; we must be content if we can recognise its vital value as the historic preparation for the great missionary message. If the Old Testament were a missionary book like the New, the New Testament would not have been necessary; the Jewish faith would have gone out to conquer the earth, and the Jewish Scriptures would have been the sufficient Gospel for mankind. But what we are to expect from the missionary study of the Old Testament is an appreciation of the long evolutionary processes by which God prepared mankind for His supreme revelation. We may expect to see the nation which was chosen as the teacher and the servant of the human race, gradually trained for its destiny, and subjected to that discipline by which alone men's wayward hearts can receive communications from God. And since, in St Augustine's striking phrase,[1] the

[1] "Novum Testamentum latet in Vetere, Vetus Testamentum patet in Novo."

New Testament is latent in the Old, we may expect to find repeated suggestions and anticipations of the missionary Gospel which was to be unveiled in the New; and if only we could arrange the Old Testament literature in its right chronological order, we might expect to find that those premonitions of what was to be, grow clearer and more convincing as time advances, a dawn which brightens more and more unto a perfect day.

With these expectations let us first examine the Law. It must be remembered that the *Pentateuch*, or the Five Books of Moses, was, *par excellence*, the Bible of Judaism—the *Prophets* and the other writings were secondary, and in some circles hardly regarded as Scripture at all. When Christ came, this sacred Law had for some four hundred years been regarded as the inviolable, the complete, and the final revelation of God. Jewish orthodoxy consisted in a minute and painstaking

mastery of the venerable code, Jewish religion expanded only in an endless and often lifeless commentary on the Law, and the rabbinical writings had made the Law so elaborate, so burdensome, and so terrifying, that as no person could fully keep the Law, and yet there was no salvation but by keeping it, the Law had become an instrument of convincing men of sin, rather than a means of securing their salvation. But in the light of Christianity this traditional handling of the Law is seen to be an unintelligent perversion. Rabbinism, however sincere, was blind; a veil rested on the eyes that were studying the Law with such slavish scrutiny.

When, from the Christian standpoint, enlightened especially by the Epistle to the Hebrews, we turn back to the Pentateuch, we find it a living book, rich in vital growth and in symbolical anticipations, a long fibrous root out of which came the new Law of

the Mount, and the greater Prophet like unto Moses. We are able to discern what escaped the shortsighted and pettifogging studies of the rabbis, that the Law, as we possess it, is the record of a long development in the religious institutions of Israel; we can see stratum on stratum of fresh legislation, and can surmise the prophetic and spiritual influences which from age to age expanded and deepened and purified the Law. In a word, we can see in the *Pentateuch*, the Law of Moses as it developed from the earliest times to the time of Ezra; and it is in recognising this gradual and fruitful development as against the cramped notion of the rabbis, that we gradually become aware of the deeper sense in which the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, and of those intimations of missionary purpose which underlie what the rabbis had made a narrow and exclusive religious system.[1]

[1] "I would not even curdle milk on the Sabbath,

It is not necessary here to go into minute details, but some hints may be given for tracing the development in the Law, for understanding its relation to the rest of the Old Testament, and, so far, perceiving how it led up to the missionary message of the New. Let the reader examine the regulations in those chapters of Exodus (xxi.-xxiv.) which are sometimes described as the *Book of the Covenant*, because they seem to

because that had been declared by the decisions of the Wise, to be a lesser kind of building; neither would I walk upon grass during the Sabbath, because that also had been pronounced by the Rabbis to be a lesser kind of threshing . . .

"One of the pupils of Abuyah asked him which was the most weighty of precepts, then he answered, 'the law of tassels, and,' said he, 'so do I esteem this law, that once, because I had chanced to tread upon a portion of the fringe of my garment going up a ladder I steadfastly refused to move from the spot where I stood, till such time as the rent had been repaired.' This Abuyah chid my mother because she wore on her dress a ribbon that was not sewn, but only fastened to her vesture. 'For this,' he said, 'my mother transgressed the Law, by bearing burdens on the Sabbath . . .'

"I joined myself to a certain brotherhood, called Chabura . . . now, it was the custom of the Chaburim

comprise the Mosaic Law in its original form, and let him compare this primitive code with the grand sweep and the ethical and spiritual passion of the Book of Deuteronomy, and he will at once become aware of the incalculable development which is here implied. Then let him study Deuteronomy side by side with Jeremiah, observing the similarity of thought, and even of diction, between the two books; and he will probably

to meet on the Sabbath day at one another's houses that we might sup together. But the space between our houses often exceeded 2000 paces, which distance was not to be exceeded by a man travelling on the Sabbath day.

"Therefore to a plain man it would have seemed that we could not sup with one another on the Sabbath day and at the same time obey the Law. . . . But, on the evening before the Sabbath, the scribes would place small pieces of meat, distant 2000 paces one from another, on the road whereon they desired to journey. 'Where a man's meat is,' said they, 'there is his home.' So when they were come in their journeying to the first piece of meat, they would say, 'Now I am at my home, and may walk yet another 2000 paces.'

"And so, walking from this home to other homes if need were, they walked as far as they listed."

Dr ABBOTT'S *Philo-christus.*

become aware how the work of that great Prophet of Anathoth, himself also a priest, was used by God to develop and spiritualise the Law.[1] In Deuteronomy all the scattered sanctuaries and the high places which were lawful and useful in the time of Samuel, and which, though with increasing corruptions, maintained themselves through the times of the kings, have disappeared, and the condition of things which was to be realised after the return from captivity, is described: the one sanctuary and the one altar. It was only the unified and purified cultus which became the true symbol of Christ, the type of the one High Priest and the one Sacrifice which could be proclaimed to all the world. And not only so, but when the connection between Jeremiah and Deuteronomy is recognised, we are entitled to interpret the Deuteronomic Law in the light of Jeremiah's great

[1] See Driver's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 95.

spiritual principle, that all the sacrifices which were enjoined at the Exodus were not of value for themselves, but were typical of a certain spiritual sacrifice, and that the whole Law was only an anticipation of another Covenant which would be written on purified hearts (Jer. xxxi. 31-34). These great thoughts of Jeremiah find frequent expression in Deuteronomy: circumcision is of the heart rather than of the body, and the whole Deuteronomic idea passes as directly into the Sermon on the Mount as the prophecies of Jeremiah pass into the Gospel delivered in Jesus Christ.

Or to examine another similar instance, there is a section of Leviticus (ch. xvii.-xxvi.) which is sometimes called the Law of Holiness; the regulations contained in it vary considerably from those in the earlier Covenant, and even from those in Deuteronomy. Amongst other significant details the familiar phrase, "the priests, the Levites," disappears, and

the priests are sharply distinguished from the Levites as a superior order. But when we turn to the Book of Ezekiel[1] and study the teaching of that prophet, himself also a priest, we find many points of contact with the Law of Holiness, and among others the explanation is given of the distinction between the Levites and the priests, and the degradation of the former into an inferior order. Here we seem to come upon the process by which the Mosaic institutions were carried to their legitimate development, and to recognise in the inspired priest-prophet of the Chebar vision, the human agency by which the Law after the Exile was determined and interpreted. Taking therefore his book as the key to the manifold regulations of the Levitical Law, we learn to see in them the symbols of that spiritual expansion which was always before the mind of

[1] Compare Lev. xxvi. 30 with Ezk. vi. 5, and Lev. xxvi. 39 with Ezk. xxxiii. 10.

Ezekiel. They typify the sprinkling of pure water which would purify the heart; and the whole restored Temple finds its significance for mankind in the prophecy of the living waters which would issue from it, a stream widening and deepening until it should cover the earth. It is evident that our Lord Himself thus took Ezekiel as the interpreter of the completed Law, and took His own mission as the fulfilment of its prophecy, when on that last day of the feast He invited the thirsty world to come unto Him and to drink, and promised that whosoever believed in Him, "out of his belly should flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 37, 38).

It will be seen then that rabbinical interpretation of the Law reduced it to a dead and encumbering letter. Not only had its doctors lost the sense of its evolution, but they had suffered its very spirit to escape. They treated it as an end in itself, and no longer observed that it all pointed to a fulfilment outside

itself. When at last that fulfilment came they were totally unable to recognise it, and were as indignant with Jesus for revising and developing the Law as they would have been with the suggestion that it had been expanded by Jeremiah or Ezekiel. They had forgotten that the Law was an organism, and were not therefore prepared to see it bud and bear the fruit for which it had all along existed. The Temple with its orders of priests, its vast shambles of sacrifice, and its traders selling and changing money in its precincts, was no longer a symbol of a better thing to be, but a privilege, a property, a dominion, of which they regarded themselves as the exclusive owners. Consequently the missionary significance of the Law was lost; so far from seeking to gather in the Gentiles, the great bulk of Israelites, excluded the "people of the land," as those who were accursed because they knew not the Law. The existence of numerous proselytes in every part of the Roman Empire in the

last century B.C. is a proof that within the Law was hidden an indestructible missionary principle, but the rabbis discouraged rather than welcomed proselytes, and never suffered them to forget that they stood upon an inferior footing. But as we come to see the principle of expansion which can be traced in the Law-book itself, and as we recognise the influence of each great spiritual personality and of each period of history on that expansion of the Law, we are prepared for that which to the rabbis seemed to be incredible and sacrilegious, the advent of One who would in a manner bring the Law to an end by fulfilling it. Quite naturally we fit on the glowing sermons of Deuteronomy to the Sermon on the Mount, and as with a flash of revelation we see the whole elaborate and detailed system of priests and sacrifices, of shewbread and incense, of veil and ark, and Holy of Holies, of feasts and purifications and atonement, realised and made the

property of the human race in the sole Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only does the Epistle to the Hebrews give an allegorical interpretation to the Law, but it offers the key without which the Law would be an insoluble mystery. Moses knew that a Prophet must arise to bring his institutions to their perfection, and Aaron knew the insufficiency of his offerings even to cleanse himself; every detail of the cultus announced its own incompleteness, and confessed it was only provisional. And the Law to-day, even to the most pious Jews, is an obvious and irreparable ruin. Where to-day is the high priest, or the altar, or the sacrifice?[1] what can be made of the minute directions for continuing the perpetual offering, or of the prophetic

[1] It is said that the modern Jews, before the Feast of the Atonement, kill a cock, supposing that the sins of Israel are in this way atoned for. This dwindled rite is all that remains of the great propitiatory system, and marks clearly the need of Christ to interpret the Law. (My authority is Frazer, *The Golden Bough*, vol. iii. p. 112).

promise that the priest and the Levite should never cease? Unless the Epistle to the Hebrews is right, unless the great missionary religion of Jesus is the fulfilment of the Law, unless Christ gathers up in His Person every jot and tittle to fulfil it, the Law is a dead and useless thing, which after 1500 years of gradual growth, and splendid prophecy of something better to come, suddenly decayed and disappeared, and has remained for 1900 years the shattered treasure of a forlorn and unmissionary Israel.

# THE MISSIONARY PROMISE IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

# CHAPTER IV

## THE MISSIONARY PROMISE IN THE HISTORY OF ISRAEL

It is not difficult to see that Christianity, the missionary religion, strikes a deep root into history. Manifestly it is the product of the Jewish people, for it is inconceivable that Christianity could have come out of the pantheism and pessimism of the Further East, and it is hardly more conceivable that it should have sprung from the sensuous polytheism of Greece, or from the hard and practical religion of Rome. No; Christ, if He is to be derived from any human family, must come from Israel, and Israel lived and developed and was trained and disciplined in order to produce Him. The missionary religion which could suit the East and the West,

and could offer a spiritual satisfaction to men of all cultures and of all ages, could come only out of a people whose training and discipline had been prolonged through many centuries under the guidance, not of chance, but of the Divine mind, which works through centuries and millenniums to its foreseen results.

If, therefore, we could be content to recognise the missionary element in the history of Israel merely from the fact that Israel was, as it were, the chrysalis which produced the butterfly, our task would not be hard. But when we wish to study the history of the people out of whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, and to detect the promise and the potency of that religious truth which would be capable of meeting the needs of the whole world, we are confronted with difficulties which may easily baffle us, and incline us to turn from the histories of the Old Testament with something like aversion.

Now, before endeavouring to face these difficulties and to find a possible mode of study, let us take a brief survey of the historic element in the Old Testament: From Genesis to the end of Nehemiah there is an irregular but unbroken stream of historical narrative. History in the modern scientific sense of the word there is not; and even history in the sense which Thucydides introduced to the human mind, namely, a careful chronological narrative, based on the sifting and comparison of divergent materials, and the final decision of a detached judgment, must not be expected; indeed the narrative flows on through what might sometimes seem to be meadows of simple fact and then passes through profound gorges, where fact disappears in mystery and imagination; sometimes the stream shrivels to mere genealogical tables, or to curt lists of individuals and their characteristic achievements, but sometimes it expands into an extraordinary fulness

of detail, and is more like biography than history; sometimes we feel we are touching the bare chronicles of a nation officially kept, and sometimes the narrative is like the rich and cherished legends of a pious and poetical people.

In Genesis we begin with the creation of all things, that distant past of which, as there could be no human witnesses, there can be no history in the ordinary sense of the term. We pass at once to the history of mankind, but are rapidly narrowed down to Israel, his forefathers and immediate descendants. In Exodus we find the Israelites the bondservants of the ancient civilisation of Egypt, and we trace their escape from the house of bondage under the guidance of the founder and lawgiver of their nation; through the rest of the Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua we follow the journey through the wilderness, and the conquest of the land which was to be the seat of the national life. But this part of the history is swollen

by the interweaving of all the legislation, political, religious, and social, which in the course of time was attached to the institutions of Moses. In the Book of Judges, we are carried over three or four centuries of broken and confused events, before the Israelites had found a king and effectual national unity. With the First Book of Samuel the king appears, and though the unity of the monarchy is only maintained under three sovereigns, the story of the kings is told in an irregular way for about four hundred years, until first the larger kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 B.C., and then in 586 B.C., the smaller kingdom of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians. With the Chronicles, the history begins afresh and in a totally changed atmosphere; the chronicler starts from Adam, and in a series of genealogies brings his reader rapidly down to King David. He has no concern with the northern kingdom of Israel, and his main interest with the

kingdom of Judah is that it furnished the preparation for the church-state after the return from Exile which we know as Judaism. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah fit closely on to the Book of Chronicles; the seventy years of the Exile are ignored, and Israel's history is resumed with the return of the captives, the rebuilding of the Temple, the completion of the Law, and the establishment of that religious system which resisted the disasters and political changes of nearly five hundred years, and remained in apparent efficiency and vigour until the Lord came to His Temple to cleanse it, and took the Law in His hand to recreate it.

If we might include the Books of the Maccabees in the Old Testament, we might continue the history of Israel through one heroic struggle at least, and come within a century and a half of the new era which Israel waited to see; but confining ourselves to the Canonical Scriptures, we find that the history has

brought us over the thousand years from Moses to Ezra, and there leaves us in a spirit of puzzled expectation.

Now the baffling difficulty of the history thus hastily sketched, when we are seeking to apprehend its missionary import, is that it seems to be a story not of progress but of decline; the golden dawn fades into the light of common day; a golden age passes into an age of iron. Leaving aside the magnificent descriptions of the creation of all things and of man in Paradise, and starting only from the heroic figures that are drawn with such extraordinary power in the opening book of the Bible, we are almost startled to realise how great a person Noah, for example, the father of nations, is in comparison with the insignificant monarchs who followed each other on the thrones of Samaria and Jerusalem. How poor and limited a personality does Nehemiah seem compared with Abraham, the father of the nation! Abraham already sees his

descendants like the stars of heaven, and the grandeur of the simple faith strikes the note of a universal religion. There is nothing parochial or sectarian or even national about him; but with all his faults and failures, he seems not unworthy to be the ancestor of Christ, and the Father of the Faithful; in him all the families of the earth seem blessed. But Nehemiah with his intense and narrow patriotism, with the piety which sought to restore and reform his people, and with the anxious plea that God would remember him for good on account of his deeds, is pathetic rather than heroic; and so far from thinking of blessing all the families of the earth, he is engaged in a petty struggle against the people of the land, whom he consigns to the judgment of God; and his principal work is to preserve his little group of returned exiles from the contamination of the surrounding people. What a strange falling off! What a result from two thousand years of the

national life to pass from Abraham to Nehemiah!

Or again, what story of the exile can compare with the story of Joseph? Daniel is noble and courageous and faithful to his God, but who could put the story of Daniel on the same plane as the story of Joseph? In every point of character, in the development of the story, in the wide beneficence of his life, and in the prophetic expectation of his death, that great lover of his brethren, beloved by his heathen friends, is an apt and beautiful symbol of Christ, and compared with the simplicity, the probability, and the naturalness of the narrative the events recorded in the Book of Daniel seem to suggest a strange decline.[1]

[1] "In face of the facts presented by the Book of Daniel, the opinion that it is the work of Daniel himself cannot be sustained. Internal evidence shows, with a cogency that cannot be resisted, that it must have been written not earlier than *c.* 300 B.C., in Palestine; and it is at least probable that it was composed under the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, B.C. 168 or 167."—*Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 467, Prof. Driver.

Or even those benedictions which Israel uttered over his sons in the Book of Genesis imply a width of outlook and a promise of the wellbeing of mankind for which we shall look in vain among the annals of that later time. One hardly ventures to put Ezra side by side with Moses, or Joshua the high priest with his tattered robes, by Aaron in his full canonicals. It seems almost irreverent and sacrilegious to think of those men in the grey and commonplace days of the Restoration, as in line with the glorious figures of the Exodus and the conquest of Canaan.

And further, the Monarchy itself is only a history of decline and fall. Saul was rejected, but he was greater far than any of the subsequent kings except David. David not only ruled a wider dominion than his successors, but his ideas had that forward reach and that possibility of expansion which seemed to suggest a world-wide reign. Making allowance for the cruder manners

and the undeveloped morality of the period 1000 B.C., we can say of David what can be said of no other king, that he was a suitable type of Christ. His greatness he bequeathed to his son, with whom it disappeared. Solomon, cultivating world-wide relations, building the Temple, and praying at its dedication for all the nations of the earth that should come to seek the Lord in that place, touches the high-water mark of missionary significance in the monarchy of Israel. With Solomon's son the monarchy was not only torn in two, but it seemed to lose all historical importance. The northern kingdom under Ahab was strong enough to gain notice in the records of Assyria, and again under Jeroboam II. it attained to a brief prosperity, when the Assyrians had weakened its neighbours just before its own time for absorption came. But as the Chronicler implies, this northern kingdom had no lasting place in the Israel of the future: it disappeared for

ever without contributing an idea or a truth to the missionary thought of the race; and the southern kingdom, limited in extent, governed by the insignificant successors of David, notwithstanding occasional revivals of religious life under the influence of prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah, fell more and more into decay; and when at last it was absorbed in the empire of Nebuchadnezzar, there seemed from the political point of view nothing to regret in the change.

After the Exile, what an extraordinary contrast is presented between the small and discouraged company that built the second Temple, weeping at its dedication, and the triumphant army which Joshua led into the Promised Land, or the united nation which, five hundred years later, enabled Solomon to build his magnificent shrine!

It is, then, in every way a descent from the large and the heroic to the petty and the commonplace; and in surveying the long and dismal record, while it

may be easy to learn lessons concerning human sin and divine punishment, we may well ask, How can any missionary purpose be bound up in such a story beyond the simple and indisputable fact, that this is the history of the nation out of which Christ and the missionary message came?

There are two ways in which this difficulty may be overcome; one of them is the traditional way, the other is the modern and scientific way. The traditional way is sanctioned by the usage of ages, and yields rich results in spiritual and moral teaching; but for the purpose of bringing out the missionary significance of Israel, and showing the steps by which the older religion widened into the new, the scientific handling of the historical literature yields results which it would be foolish to ignore. There are many who regard this latter method with suspicion and dislike, and they are apt to think that it destroys the authority of Scripture; but it is one of the wonders

of the Bible that under the free and unprejudiced treatment of a scholarship which regards the Bible just like any other literature, the divine meaning of the book and of the religion which it conveys becomes only the more evident. Certainly, for the purpose of studying the history of Israel in its missionary bearings, we gain much by adopting the scientific method.

1. *The traditional way.*—According to the mode of regarding the history of Israel which we have inherited from the uncritical view of the Jews themselves, the history begins always with glorious and fully developed ideals, from which men are constantly departing. Everything is created very good, and steadily becomes worse. The Fathers of Israel are models of faith, and wisdom, and heroism, and their posterity is more unworthy of them generation after generation. The Law is given at once in its completeness, and the nation departs farther and farther from it as it proceeds;

the kingdom starts at its highest and rapidly degenerates, and we are led to feel that this natural tendency to deterioration and the flagrant rebellion against God are properly punished by the final collapse and the long Captivity. From this point of view the successive strokes of chastisement, culminating in the destruction of the nation and of the Temple, achieve this one result, that Israel in the Captivity finally puts away his idols and becomes once and for ever the worshipper and the witness of the one God. The exiles, returning humbled and sobered, establish a petty state, without the glory of David's kingship and without the splendour of Solomon's Temple; but though the brilliant ideals of the dawn have faded away there is this compensation, that the new constitution is the scrupulous keeper of the law and the supreme safeguard of Monotheism. Perhaps we may put it in a word thus: the faith of Abraham, in which all the families of the earth should be blest, was

by these long centuries of discipline defined as the faith in one God; and the Law of Moses, which before the Captivity was never really kept, became at last the practical guide of Judaism; and out of this purified though contracted religion Christ was to come, to realise the faith of Abraham, to spiritualise the Law of Moses, and to fulfil the promise of David's kingdom.

There is much in the prophets which confirms this view. All of them from Amos to Malachi are loud in their denunciations of sinful Israel, and yet most of them anticipate a future in which the promise of the nation will be fulfilled, and a purified people under a Divine Ruler will bring the nations of the world to the spiritual Zion. Taking the prophets to interpret the history, as we have every right to do, we may study those centuries of unfaithfulness and decline and find everywhere the signs that the bright ideals with which the nation began were working out towards an

unforeseen result; through apparent failures and pitiable disappointments they were awaiting the expectation of great events which would in unexpected ways fulfil and more than fulfil the ancient promises. A study of the history on these lines must be instructive, and yet it leaves something to be desired, as a demonstration of the missionary purpose of the whole process. If now we turn to the modern method of handling the history, it is because that method, revolutionary as it seems, brings out the missionary evolution of Israel in a clear development from the beginning.

2. *The scientific method.*—Historical science to-day takes the Old Testament documents and treats them in the same way as the literature of other ancient peoples. Starting without dogmatic bias and applying the tests which it uses for Herodotus or for Livy, it proceeds in a way, and it often reaches conclusions which shock and horrify devout believers.

But as nothing can prevent scientific historians from taking this course, and as our missionary converts must in their contact with Western thought become aware that this course is taken, we should not shrink from examining these strange conclusions and estimating how they effect our religious position.

Now, historical criticism investigating the books of the Old Testament insists on the fact that while the narrative from the Creation to the new Judaism of Ezra and Nehemiah runs in chronological order, the parts of that history were by no means composed in that order. Thus an earlier part written in a later time may bear the colour and the thought of the later time, and the most primitive stories may be presented in the atmosphere of the later age in which they assumed a literary form. Suppose, by way of illustration, that a nineteenth-century writer in England should prefix to his history Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* to cover the period of Arthur, and should then go

on with the *Saxon Chronicle;* we should have something like the literary complexion which historical science finds in the Old Testament literature. The Book of Judges is a more ancient document than the completed Pentateuch as we read it, though the Pentateuch deals with earlier events. The Book of Genesis, containing the origins of the nation and of the world, is, as a piece of literature, among the recent works of Judaism.[1] When prophetic writers in the later days of the national development told the primitive stories of their race and wrote their magnificent account of the origin of things, they breathed into their work the spirit of their own highly developed religion. When the laborious and conscientious compilers of the Law brought the code into its present form, arranging the accumulated materials of centuries, they regarded the whole in the light which they had gathered from

[1] Driver's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 19.

Ezra and Nehemiah. When the chroniclers of a later date told the story of David and Solomon, they pictured the splendours of these earlier reigns in the light of a wistful fancy which always places the golden age in the past. That such a tendency was at work in Hebrew historians is proved by the Books of Chronicles, for there the post-Exilic chronicler re-writes the history of David's kingdom, reading into the older records of the Books of Kings the ideas and standards of the centralised and developed religious cultus with which he himself was familiar.

We cannot here go into details, but the general effect of this critical handling of the authorities is, that the history of Israel appears not as a decadence prolonged through centuries, but as a perfectly steady upward movement; the noble and brilliant ideals which appear at the beginning of the literary records are really the outcome of the long travail and discipline of that develop-

ment, the creation of those inspired poets and prophets who were raised up to guide the national evolution. From this point of view the Church of the restored exiles, which we know as Judaism, was by far the highest achievment which the race had yet reached, and to reach such a point of development was worth all the struggle and the suffering which led up to it. That church showed its capacity for producing the great future by the way in which it re-wrote the history of its past. In its atmosphere of chastened and spiritual anticipation the story of creation became a grand psalm of six days' labour, followed by the sacred day of rest; and the stories of the Patriarchs become sermons, rich in moral significance and spiritual power, which the world will never outgrow. In that atmosphere, the Exodus from Egypt, the wanderings in the wilderness, and the entrance into Canaan, became a parable of redemption, which seems to

labour with a promise of a Redeemer; and the giving of the Law is invested with a symbolic beauty which suggests another law of more world-wide significance. In that atmosphere the undoubtedly great figures of David and Solomon were enriched with attributes which made them prophetic types of a coming King; their petty kingdom was made to imply a dominion from sea to sea, a government of all mankind, laid on the shoulder of a Diviner David; to the one was attributed the national psalmody, by far the most wonderful psalmody ever produced, and to the other was attributed the sententious wisdom which in its personified form became the clearest forecast of Messias.

Thus from the critical handling of Old Testament history comes the astonishing result, that Israel was gradually led under prophetic guidance from a primitive obscurity of Semitic immorality and idolatry, through a chequered history of trivial wars and insubstantial dynasties,

into the fiery furnace of the Captivity, from which it emerged, like Job from his affliction, to realise a greatness which it had never known in the past. Between that return from exile and the coming of Christ, the history of that prepared people is the incubation of the Messianic idea. Apparently engaged in glorifying and stereotyping its past, Judaism was really waiting with bowed head for the expectation of Israel. And that proselytising impulse which we can discern in the last century B.C., as if Judaism were just on the point of blossoming into a missionary religion, is the last and proper outcome of its long development, and the natural link with that Christian revelation to which it had been pointing.

To handle the Old Testament therefore in the scientific way, and without dogmatic prejudice, may mean to surrender much that is cherished, but to gain something that is still more desirable. It may enable us to see

in Christianity the missionary message for the world, which had been prepared by a natural historical development, and which is therefore guaranteed by the science and by the widening thought of our time, as it is by the intrinsic and self-evident truth which the human soul recognises in it.

"HOLY MEN OF OLD SPAKE
AS THEY WERE MOVED
BY THE HOLY SPIRIT"

# CHAPTER V

## "HOLY MEN OF OLD SPAKE AS THEY WERE MOVED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT"

THE main work of the prophets was to guide the development of Israel, sometimes as statesmen who appealed to the king, and sometimes as preachers who appealed to the people. We have already seen their influence at work on the Law and on the social and political life of their countrymen, and, so far as they were the makers of Israel, we can at once apprehend the missionary message which they had for the world. But as men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, exhibiting the divine authority of the moral law, and expressing the designs of God for mankind, they frequently enjoyed visions of a distant future, and broke into

exultant forecasts of a time when the truth they knew would be received, and the God they served would be acknowledged, not only by Israel but by all nations. Some of these missionary forecasts, for example in the Book of Isaiah, have become so familiar as to be the clearest biblical expression of the prospect for a world-wide diffusion of the Gospel. But the missionary study of the prophets as a whole is still difficult, even for erudite scholars, and wellnigh impossible for the reader who is at the mercy of the English versions. And yet the impression made by the familiar passages in Isaiah is greatly deepened and intensified when an adequate notion is gained of the whole prophetic activity in Israel. These prophets one and all gazed on their nation as a chosen instrument of God, they felt that it had a world-wide destiny; the terrific chastisements which they denounced, were not to destroy, but to purify the nation; and the privileges they

claimed for it were not exclusive, but rather a deposit for the welfare of the world. Few things would quicken our missionary zeal more effectually than to realise these holy men of old whose writings extend from the eighth to the fourth century B.C., possibly even to the second, travailing in birth with the Gospel which Christ was to bring, and, like John the Baptist, the last of their order, preparing the way in the wilderness for the coming of the heavenly kingdom.

The difficulties in the way of such a study are great, but not insurmountable; they are due to the fact that the Jewish editing of the prophetic literature, which we until recent years have blindly accepted, is hardly worthy of the name at all. Thus the writings lie in our Bibles out of all chronological order; the prophecies or oracles are perversely mixed up; a very early one is followed without any notice by a very late one; sometimes a chasm of centuries will yawn between them. As the text con-

tains no note of these bewildering transitions, and offers nothing but internal evidence to indicate the date or the circumstances of a particular passage, the reader becomes bewildered, and either may give up the study of the prophets altogether or may extract from the words meanings that the writers never dreamed of. There is a further difficulty which taxes the patience of scholars: the text in some parts, for example Hosea or Ezekiel, is occasionally so uncertain that intelligible renderings are only reached by conjectural emendations. Very much that is obscure in the original has a fallacious clearness in our English versions, and a good deal that is obscure in these versions could only be made clear by the discovery of a sounder Hebrew text. A few notes on the prophetic literature, however, may encourage the student to make fresh attempts and may lead him to the discovery of fresh treasures in this disordered literature. There are, according to the Jewish

arrangement, five prophetic books:[1] a glance at each of them in succession may help us to realise the need of better editing. The first of the books is a collection of prophecies gathered under the name of Isaiah, but there is no evidence that the collection as a whole was written by that great prophet. Chapters xl. to lxvi. belong evidently to the Exile, and in the earlier chapters there are considerable passages which shine with a new meaning when they are dated long after the time of Isaiah.[2] It would indeed be interesting to know whether these diverse writings were gathered under the prophet's name

[1] Strictly speaking, the Books of Kings were treated as part of the Prophets, but we are now concerned only with the books which, according to our current usage, are deemed prophetic.

[2] Prof. G. A. Smith's books on Isaiah, and on the Minor Prophets, in the *Expositor's Bible*, have put within the reach of every reader the evidences for the right arrangement and dating of these particular prophets. For the remainder, the best and most accessible work is Prof. Driver's *Introduction to the Old Testament Literature*.

by chance or by design ; but it is evident that the right use of these great oracles cannot be made until the approximate dates are fixed, and the conditions out of which they arose are understood.

The second book, that of Jeremiah, is not beset with the same difficulties ; there is little reason for questioning that practically all came from the pen of that greatest of the Prophets. But here the arrangement of the prophecies is so unchronological,[1] and the reader is carried out of the course by such frequent back eddies, that it is hard rightly to appreciate the onward movement and the true greatness of the book. But here in confused order we get the solemn voices, the warnings, and the forecasts which came to Jeremiah to guide his people through the awful passage of national dissolution and exile, and to assure them of the beneficent results which would be achieved by the chastisement.

[1] Driver's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 254.

The third book, that of Ezekiel, is a compact and distinct work of the prophet, who lived and died in the land of exile. The editing of this book, accomplished probably by the prophet himself, was all that could be desired; the only difficulty here is, as we have seen, that Ezekiel's text became injured in transcription before the period when the careful work of scribes fixed and stereotyped the text of the sacred writings.

The fourth book, that of Daniel, did not obtain a place in the Hebrew Canon until the second century B.C. There is nothing to indicate its authorship. It is the story of Daniel, containing reports of his visions, and speeches, and prayers, but probably written long after his lifetime.

The fifth Book is called the book of the Twelve, or in our common parlance the Minor Prophets. It is a collection of brief prophetic writings, some of them the noblest utterances of Hebrew pro-

phecy, but arranged so perversely that their connection with each other, and with the four previous books is completely lost. For example, Amos is the earlier contemporary of Hosea; while Joel, who is inserted between Hosea and Amos, is probably the latest prophetic book we possess, with the exception of Daniel. We are therefore only misled if we imagine that the order of the Minor Prophets is any indication of date.

If, then, we would understand the message of Hebrew prophecy, and especially if we would trace an idea such as the missionary intention, which widened and clarified with the progress of time, it is evident that we must become familiar with the order and with the circumstances of the several prophecies. It is not of course necessary that the books in our English Bible should be broken up and re-arranged; but it is necessary that the missionary student should re-arrange the material for himself, and should so be able to

estimate the development and expansion of the missionary idea in the Prophets. And, it may be observed, so regular is the growth of that idea that it may be taken as one of the means of detecting the date of an unknown prophecy; for it may be assumed that the more clearly a prophet sees the missionary significance of Israel's religion, the nearer he has come to the time and the appearing of Christ.

Let us attempt now in a general way to block out our prophetic literature as it may be most conveniently studied for the purpose which we have in view. We must not enter into details, and details are comparatively unimportant if only we can succeed in tracing the main lines of prophetic teaching. Our earliest written prophets are Amos and Hosea. Their ministry was directed to the northern kingdom, and their message, if we may put them together, was the announcement of the approaching Assyrian conquest, as the punish-

ment for the sins of Samaria, the capital, and of Bethel, the royal sanctuary. But that message, clearly enough in Amos and yet more clearly in Hosea, was one of promise and of hope; the Lord loved Israel, and therefore punished him, and after the punishment would come a glorious restoration. This was the first note of the Prophets whose writings have come down to us, hardly a missionary note, except in the sense that the ethical demands of God and the unchanging love of God to His people are the only sure foundations of a universal religion, and therefore Israel was prepared for a spiritual expansion by the Prophets, who were able to teach such a lesson.

Following closely on these two prophets of the northern kingdom come the two prophets of the southern kingdom, Micah and Isaiah. As Samaria fell under the assault of the Assyrian, Micah and Isaiah were commissioned to denounce the oppression, the immo-

rality, and the corrupt worship of the southern kingdom, which deserved a similar fate. But Jerusalem was not to fall before the Assyrian; Hezekiah was, as the Assyrian annals tell, caged up in Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah were wasted. But the invading host withdrew, and the kingdom of Judah stood for more than a century longer. It was this deliverance of Zion which gave to Isaiah, the prophet of the capital, and to Micah, the prophet of the countryside, their glorious visions of a New Jerusalem and of the nations of the earth coming up to her as to the city of God. They saw a holier King upon the throne, and they recognised that holiness would exalt a regenerated nation, and men would be united in a worship of God, who would demand no longer ritual services but justice and mercy and a humble walk with Him. Thus in the writings of Isaiah and Micah, the ethical demand of prophecy and the glorious deliverance of Jerusalem make

the first glowing pictures of a Messias exercising a moral and spiritual sway over the whole of mankind. And as Isaiah had a vivid imagination and a gift of poetic speech which place him among the greatest writers of all time, the missionary idea which he shared with his contemporary Micah was not only engrained in the religion of Israel, but made a possession of mankind for ever.

After these four great prophets of the eighth century B.C., there was a long interval, and then when the transitory reformation of Josiah had failed, and the doom of Judah was impending, the greatest of Hebrew prophets, Jeremiah, appeared (621-586 B.C.).[1] His contemporary Zephaniah may have been hardly less than he, but we possess but little of his work; fortunately, Jeremiah has come down to us in a large body of his oracles, and the man and his message

[1] The last three chapters of Zechariah belong to this period, if not to Jeremiah himself.

are among the greatest treasures of our religion. His was the unpopular task of announcing the certain fall of Jerusalem, and commanding the king and his people to yield to Nebuchadnezzar. A patriot of the noblest type, he had to appear to his contemporaries as a traitor. But, on the other hand, he in conjunction with Zephaniah had the joy of declaring the unchanging love of God : the Captivity was an appointed school of discipline; the return was certain; the nation that should return would be a chosen people, indeed, united to God by a new and spiritual covenant. Jeremiah knew that a Branch would spring forth, a Branch of Righteousness, and that a holy ruler of a regenerated people would bless and save mankind. Thus through the work of great and inspired prophets, the terrible entrance into captivity became like the valley of Achor, a door of hope; and all the qualities and principles which would enable Judaism to widen out into a

religion for the world were secured in the awful humiliation and anguish of the Exile.

During those years of the Exile, much of the noblest work of Hebrew prophecy was produced; how much we do not see, owing to the bad editing of the books. The one indubitable work of the Exile is the Book of Ezekiel. Its burden may be summed up in a sentence: the nation, which is like the bleached bones of a fallen army, shall rise again into life; the Temple, which is in ruins, shall be restored and cleansed; a holy people, a priestly nation, shall pour out blessings over the world, and that omnipresent God who appeared in vision by the river Chebar, the God who utters the great phrase, "all souls are Mine," will through His holy people claim all souls, and show that they are His. Thus when the man and the situation are realised, the Book of Ezekiel becomes a priceless passage of missionary literature.

But still more instructive and attractive is that marvellous prophecy which, for reasons unknown to us, was incorporated in the Book of Isaiah.[1] This was without question the greatest utterance of the Exile period. The gist of it is this: Israel, chastened and disciplined, reduced to a mere remnant in the Captivity, is seen by the Prophet as the suffering servant of God. By His sufferings through the scorn of men, and the malignity which numbers him with malefactors, this servant of God is to draw the Gentiles to Him. We all know how the impassioned delineation of this mystical Israel becomes the clearest prophecy in the Old Testament of the suffering Messias, but we may also discover how the glowing pictures of the ransomed Israel drawing the Gentiles to God, become the clearest prophecy of the missionary scope of Christianity. It is possibly the striking missionary note in this unknown writer of the

[1] Driver's *Introduction to the Old Testament*, p. 217.

Exile that led the Jewish editors to include his writings in the Book of Isaiah, but the significance of that book is only apprehended when it is seen that the prophecies contained in it extend over 200 years, and represent the magnificent development of Isaiah's original ideas into the world-wide reach of Israel's mission, which was conceived in the Exile.

The days of Zerubbabel and the return from exile produced two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, whose function it was to encourage the building of the Temple and to re-establish the forlorn community in Jerusalem. It may be noticed in passing that the last three chapters of the Book of Zechariah stand where they do by mistake; instead of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, with which Zechariah was concerned, they announce the destruction of Jerusalem, and the subsequent glorious recovery by the coming of the Branch, quite in the spirit of Jeremiah; and indeed a passage

from chapter eleven is quoted by St Matthew (xxvii. 9), as a prophecy of 'Jeremy the prophet.' But placing these last three chapters with Jeremiah, and Zephaniah in the days before the Exile, we can study Haggai and Zechariah ch. i.-xi. together, and find in them manifold forecasts that the restored Temple and city were to have a greater glory than those which had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, because from them would issue a religious truth which would reach far and wide over the world.

The remaining seven books of the prophetic literature do not give us any distinct determinations of their dates; three of them are brief and concentrated denunciations of three powers that have harassed or oppressed Israel. Obadiah declares the destruction of Edom and the city of Selah; Nahum declares the ruin of Nineveh; and Habakkuk declares the punishment of the Chaldeans who had brought destruction to Judah and Jerusalem.

Considering the denunciatory character of these three prophecies, it is remarkable that each of them gives decisive hints of salvation, and that Habakkuk is the author of the phrase that is the charter of a world-wide religion, "the just shall live by his faith." Malachi, which means "my messenger," is a stirring cry from the days of the restored Temple, and seems to start the Jewish Church on the career which was to end in the coming of the Lord. Standing as it does at the end of the Old Testament, it looks out keenly to the New, and reminds us how the Law and the Prophets must all wait in expectation for a fulfilment.

But there are three prophetic writings which, oddly placed by the Jewish editors, seem from their internal evidence to belong to a still later period than that of Malachi. They stand midway between Malachi and the coming of Christ, and as we should expect, these three writings contain the clearest and

most advanced views of the missionary purpose in Judaism, and give the plainest indications of the coming of Christianity that we find anywhere in the Old Testament.

And when the new order begins the most significant references are made to these three latest books: Jonah is seen to be a prophecy of Christ's resurrection; Daniel is the source from which Christ took His own self-designation of the Son of Man; and Joel is the prophet of the day of Pentecost.[1] The dates and the writers of these three books are unknown to us, but when they are placed at the end of Hebrew prophecy their missionary import is clear as the day. The fact that they are anonymous

[1] The reader will find in Hastings' *Dictionary of the Bible* under the three names, the best statement of the probable dates of these books. The tradition which attributes Jonah and Daniel to the two prophets who are the subjects of the books has been accepted without question, but when it is questioned it is found to be as untenable as the notion that the Books of Samuel were written by Samuel, or that the Book of Ruth was written by Ruth.

seems to make them more like the voice of the Spirit in the Jewish Church. In Jonah the prophetic author tells a story of an old prophet in the days of Jeroboam II., the period when Assyria was threatening the existence of Israel. But the story states that the prophet was sent on a missionary journey to the terrible city of the Assyrians; that he did all in his power to elude the duty, and at last, after bringing Nineveh to repentance, was indignant with God for His mercy to that vast heathen population. The writer of this story has gained a missionary point of view which was incredible to the earlier Israelites. Nahum mentions Nineveh only to overwhelm it with destruction; the great Isaiah had a vision of Assyria and Egypt becoming with Israel, a third, the people of God (Isa. xiii. 24, 25); but this later writer actually sends a prophet of Israel on a missionary journey to the city that oppressed his

people, and in this way introduces the idea that God has an equal concern for all nations, and that the real function of Israel is to preach the truth to mankind, even to its enemies and oppressors.[1]

The Book of Joel differs from the older prophetic books in the fact that it is not a denunciation of the people's sins, but rather expresses the conscience and repentance of the people under the visitation of a great calamity. The writer encourages a general assembly to mourn over and seek deliverance from the locust hordes, but from this local situation he suddenly soars to the great vision of the Spirit poured out upon all flesh, and of salvation granted unto all who call upon the name of the Lord; and though he seems to fall from this lofty standpoint and to gather the nations in the valley of judgment rather to be punished than to be saved, that

[1] Perhaps I may be allowed to refer to my own Commentary on Jonah in the *Century Bible*, Messrs T. C. & E. C. Jack.

clear and thrilling announcement of the Spirit's possessing men and women of all ranks, gives to his little book a unique place in the history of the Kingdom of God, and a perpetual value in the prosecution of that missionary enterprise which it so clearly foretold.

The Book of Daniel stands by itself in the Old Testament, and belongs rather to the apocalyptic than to the prophetic type of literature; but its value from the missionary point of view is overwhelming. For whatever may be the minute interpretation of the times and seasons, the succession of events and the coming of Messias, there are two lessons which are indisputable in its pages: the first object of the book is to show that the children of God in the face of heathen powers are secured against all dangers, and may convert the heathen, even great potentates, to God. The history of missions is a commentary on the early chapters of the book, and works like the autobiography of John

Paton and the life of James Chalmers show how God is able to protect His servants from the wrath of man in the prosecution of their missionary labours. But the second object of the Book of Daniel is to show in a series of symbolic visions, how the great kingdoms and empires of the earth must pass away and be finally replaced by the Kingdom of God. And it is the peculiar characteristic of this book, to associate with this triumph of the divine purpose the personal effort of individual workers like Daniel himself; not only is he to stand in his lot in the end of the days, but all who are wise and turn men to righteousness are to be clothed with an eternal glory. Thus the latest book of the Old Testament becomes the most definite and distinct in its missionary teaching, and forms a remarkable link between the old order of the Prophets and the new Kingdom which they were sent to foretell.

From this brief summary and sug-

gested re-arrangement of the prophetic writings, it will be seen in how many ways the prophetic purpose worked towards a missionary faith, and how clearly it was an increasing purpose, which gathered distinctness and force as the ages rolled on, and the coming of Christ drew near.[1]

[1] Re-arrangement of prophetic writings—

(i.) Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah. } 786-700 B.C.

(ii.) Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, chaps. xii.-xiv. } 639-586 B.C.

(iii.) Ezekiel, Isaiah xl.-lxvi. The Exile, 570-458 B.C.

(iv.) Haggai, Zechariah. The Return from Exile, 522 B.C.

(v.) The Three Denunciations, undated: Obadiah of Edom, Nahum of Nineveh, Habakkuk of Babylon.

(vi.) Malachi, perhaps 432 B.C.
Jonah, Joel, later.
Daniel, perhaps in the second century B.C.

# IMAGINATIVE AND PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

# CHAPTER VI

## IMAGINATIVE AND PHILOSOPHICAL WRITINGS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

NOWHERE does the Gospel as a message for the whole world strike its root more decisively into the past than in the miscellaneous writings of the Old Testament. And this is no matter of surprise when one observes that these writings contain the choicest specimens of the imaginative and the philosophical thought of the elect people. It is after all not so much in the law book, or the histories, or the sermons of a nation that its heart most fully reveals itself; the storyteller, the poet, and the thinker give expression to the spontaneous feelings and aspirations of a people. It may be an exaggeration to say that he who writes the national songs is more

important than the legislator; but there can be no question that to find the real trend of an age or of a people you must examine the imaginative side of its life and its systematic thought as they find utterance through men of genius. If, for example, we wished to sum up the nineteenth century in England, we should feel that no parliamentary history, and no legislative achievements, and not even the varieties of religious belief would take us so surely to the heart of the question, as the writings of Wordsworth and Carlyle, of Browning and Ruskin, of Matthew Arnold and Herbert Spencer. It is the great function of the imagination to get at the deeper, the more general, and the more permanent truths of the time, while it is the function of philosophic thought to crystallise the truth which is held in solution by ordinary minds. If, then, we would understand the real drift of Israel's life and the service which it was to render to man-

kind, we must make a careful study of such pieces of literature, imaginative and philosophical, as have come down to us. And though the volume of these fragments is small in bulk, it is rich in quality, and we may safely say that no nation was ever more clearly revealed and no tract of time is more distinctly marked out than the Jewish people over the centuries from David to Christ in the poetry and other writings which are in our hands.

First of all we have several specimens of imaginative work in idyllic story and drama; then we have works of sententious wisdom which in Israel took the place of philosophy; and finally we have a great collection of poetry which is all in the deepest sense religious.

Even in the briefest survey of these works it becomes plain how the heart of this people, notwithstanding its intense naturalism, had a meaning and a message for all the world. This broad fact might suffice to prove the point: we, a

Western race, after centuries of progress, with great poets and great thinkers of our own, find an undying charm in the stories, derive practical guidance from the wisdom, and express our deepest religious emotions in the poetry, of that old Semitic race. If those writings are suitable for the Occident and for the twentieth century, there is reason to think they have an equal application to all countries and to all times.

The matchless stories of the Old Testament have been already glanced at in surveying the Law, and the history and some of the finest of them occur in the prophetic books, *e.g.*, Jonah and Daniel, but there are some others which stand by themselves. The story of Ruth is one of the most perfect idylls in literature, but found in the work of Hebrew writers it is as surprising as it is beautiful. The Law as we have it forbids a Moabite to enter into the congregation of Israel; but the writer of this little book lavishes his tender-

ness on the description of a Moabite woman, and delights to tell how she became an immediate ancestress of Israel's greatest King. And this wide outlook of the imaginative element in Israel appears again in the Book of Job, where the writer, desiring to portray a character of lofty excellence and faultless piety, does not select one of his own nationality, but draws the magnificent picture of Job in the land of Uz.[1] The more intensely national the Judaistic feeling became after the Captivity, the more impressive appears this movement of the Spirit of God in the imaginative writers. They were kept constantly aware that God does not leave Himself without a witness in any nation, and that what is truth for them is truth for all mankind. Foolish indeed would he be who should discredit these nobler lessons because they are presented in

[1] Prof. A. B. Davidson's book on Job will show the reader the point of view from which the book is here treated.

works of the imagination, since it is the peculiar gift of the imagination to invest the legalism and the exactitude of moral truth with the tender atmosphere of the spirit.

One of these stories, the Book of Esther, is, it is true, devoid of missionary meaning; it is intensely nationalistic, and there the Jew is seen in his most forbidding aspect, seeking not to convert the heathen, but only to wreak on them vengeance for an intended assault; but how remarkable it is that this is the only book of the Bible in which the name of God does not occur! When we are thinking of the heathen, not to bless and to save them, but only to visit them with cruelties like their own, we have no right to use the name of God, who is the God of all nations, and, as we now know, the Father of all mankind.

The Book of Job[1] is a transition, in

[1] This book in a remarkable way combines in itself the three elements of story, philosophy, and poetry, which we are now surveying.

the form of a dramatic dialogue, from the stories to the philosophy of the Old Testament; Proverbs and Ecclesiastes within the Canon, and Ecclesiasticus and the Book of Wisdom in the Apocrypha, belong to the same class of literature. The Hebrew thinkers did not, like the Greeks, construct long and connected arguments; they expressed their thoughts rather in brief sentences, often in an antithetical form or in metrical compositions, which are not distinguishable from poetry. These Wisdom books are remarkable for their complete detachment from the Law and from the history of Israel. The reflections which they contain, and the conclusions which they reach, are not only free from a national bias, but frequently seem to run counter to the acknowledged orthodoxy. They are as suitable to one race as to another, and their cosmopolitanism is another revelation of that element in Israel which was meant, not for a sect or a party but for mankind. Thus in the

Book of Job the problem of suffering is discussed, and, against the current notion that suffering is the reward of iniquity, is asserted the noble truth that it is sometimes the trial of righteousness. And if the book was produced in the Captivity, and Job, afflicted and despoiled, but afterwards restored and enriched, is the symbol of the whole nation passing through such an experience, the teaching links itself on to that of the Prophets, who taught that in the furnace of affliction the nation was prepared to discharge its great service to the world.

The Book of Ecclesiastes is so intensely and pathetically human that it will never be out of date. Renan, one of the acutest literary critics of the nineteenth century, confessed that it was his favourite work in Hebrew literature. It is the weary sigh of worldly wisdom, the confession of a disillusionised humanity, when every source of interest and of pleasure has been tried, that this world is but vanity. And from the

apparent pessimism of this judgment we are driven to the right conclusion, that in religion and in divine revelation is to be found the only possible explanation of life. To compare this pessimism of the Jewish thinker, leading to God, with the similar pessimism of the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam, leading only to self-indulgence, is to gain a genuine view of the missionary impulse of Jewish thought. No one can look at life steadily and judge it dispassionately, without recognising the melancholy truth of Ecclesiastes ; and that exquisite passage which describes in tender imagery the last scene of all in every human life, will always haunt the imagination like Richard the Second's speech or like Gray's "Elegy"; but the impressive application which the Preacher makes of his world-weary discourse is one of which all the world stands in need. If this book stood alone it could hardly serve as a message of salvation, but forming, as it does, only an aspect of the biblical literature, it

directs the reader to the other parts in order to learn what is the meaning of the fear of God and what are His commandments, the keeping of which is the whole duty of man.

The Book of Proverbs is a mine of wealth, and the variety of its contents defies an attempt at a brief summary. But the dominating note which really sounds through all these scattered observations on human life is that which is sounded most clearly in chap. viii. There wisdom is personified and speaks as a voice from heaven, her beautiful claim is that she was the assessor of God in the creation of the world, and that even from the beginning her delights were with the sons of men. As an abstraction she seems to anticipate a concrete reality, and almost irresistibly we place her language in the lips of Christ, that Divine Being who was with God from the beginning, and in whose image man was made. In this way the wisdom of the Old Testament anticipates

the revelation of Christianity, and acquires a practical missionary bearing. The systems of philosophy, whether ancient or modern, have little proselytising power, "they have their day and cease to be." Even Aristotle, who dominated human thought for 1500 years, has become obsolete before he became missionary. And it would raise a smile to speak of the philosophy of Kant going out to convert the heathen. It was the enthusiastic suggestion of Auguste Comte, that Positivist missionaries might break the virgin soil of Africa, and instruct the unsophisticated negroes in the religion of humanity; but the Positivist system is growing antiquated before these missionaries have appeared. On the other hand the wisdom of the Hebrews is being translated into every language under heaven, and disseminated among races that are emerging from barbarism, and among ancient civilisations which have a wisdom of their own. The reason is, if we may put it in a

sentence, that that wisdom emerged into Christ, and Christ was made of God wisdom unto the world.

A study of those instructive books Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon, which were apparently excluded from the Canon, only because they were written in Greek instead of Hebrew, will strikingly confirm the missionary import of the Old Testament Wisdom Literature.[1]

Turning now to the poetry of the Old Testament outside of the Psalter, we find two poems, one a love song of unsurpassed melody and charm, the other a series of dirges over the fall of Jerusalem; but the Song of Solomon and Lamentations only yield anything to our present purpose, by means of an allegoris-

[1] *E.g.* The second chapter of Wisdom gives a description of the persecuted righteous man as the Son of God, which might be a portrait of Christ. In Ecclesiasticus we get such a significant utterance, "Forget not the good offices of thy surety, for he hath given his life for thee" (ch. xxix. 15); and we have the great missionary prayer, "Let them (the nations) know Thee, as we also have known Thee, that there is no God, but only Thou, O God." (ch. xxxvi. 5.)

ing interpretation which is coming to be more and more questionable as a means of Scripture exegesis. The Psalter, on the other hand, in more ways than one, is rich in missionary meaning. It is said that in the service of the Jewish synagogue praise predominates over prayer, and that is no wonder, considering that the Psalter is the liturgy; on the other hand, it is said that intercession for the peoples beyond Israel is almost entirely wanting, and that is very strange, because the Psalter, as we read it, seems to embrace the world. If Israel is the immediate subject and if Jewish forms of expression prevail, yet we who have the New Testament in our hands can never read the Psalms without seeing Christ in the King, and the world-wide community of God in Israel. We thank and bless Judaism for giving us the Psalter, just as the world may thank England for giving it Shakespeare; but Shakespeare and the Psalter, once given, are the property not of a nation but of the world.

And indeed the Psalter far more than Shakespeare belongs to mankind, for while that incomparable English of the Elizabethan drama defies translation into any other language, no poetry ever written is so translatable as the Psalms ; they seem to be written in a universal tongue, and, except where the meaning of the original is obscure, there is no difficulty in rendering them poetically into any language under heaven. And as the language is plain, so the thought and the feeling are those of man as such. James Gilmour, a solitary missionary in Mongolia, fills his journals and letters with gratitude for the Psalms ; he found them equal to all his needs and the expression of all his singular situations. He could, he said, launch his canoe at any time upon that stream, and be carried whither he would go. Any man anywhere can make the same discovery.

The hymn-book or the poetry of the most particularistic nation in the world is found to be that which meets the

universal need. The hymns of the Veda or the Homeric hymns can be read for their literary interest, but what people outside India would use in worship the one, or what people anywhere would use in worship the other? Yet these Hebrew Psalms are used wherever Christianity goes, and they have no small share in carrying it into the uttermost parts of the earth. There can be no hesitation in recognising the supernatural cause of this remarkable fact. Whoever were the human authors of the Psalms, the real author was the Spirit of God. No human poet and no series of poets could have produced a collection capable of accomplishing such results as this has accomplished. Place any of these Psalms side by side with ordinary poetry, as Mr Henley has done in his splendid selection of English lyrics, and you at once become aware on what a different plane they move, what a different note they strike, and what a more distant goal they aim at.

If we try more particularly to define this universal element in the Psalms, we find that we are involved in just the difficulties which beset every attempt to analyse great poetry. The effects are produced by expedients so simple and obvious, that under analysis they are liable to disappear. But there is one thing which strikes the reader of the Psalter at once, for the second Psalm already gives it full expression, and that is the constant anticipation of a King that shall reign in righteousness, and of a Kingdom that shall reach to the uttermost ends of the earth. This theme is perpetually recurring; the language used might be suggested by some of the nobler passages in the history of the Monarchy, by the times of David and Solomon, or by the pious efforts of Josiah or Hezekiah. But the historical events are utterly inadequate to the splendid and spiritual delineations of the poets. The King of whom they sing is more God than man, and the

dominion which is promised to Him is humanity rather than Israel. Of course the national colouring is there, and the flights of fancy are sometimes brought down rather suddenly to concrete realities, before the poet's eye; but as we put together the catena of these Psalms touching the King and the Kingdom, we know that we are dealing with a great missionary thought, which admits of no limitation short of humanity as a whole. He must be a very partial and blinded critic who, in reading a noble literature, misses the great trend of its thought, and is staggered by elements which seem contradictory to it. Human expression cannot remain on its highest elevation continually, and the noblest visions fade from time to time, or are marred by spots of blindness; it is therefore a narrow and misguided judgment, which would discredit the noble anticipations of the universal reign of peace and equity which abound in the Psalms, because now and then a poet,

stung by the treachery of friends, or smarting under the cruelties and oppression of foes, breaks out into fierce and unhallowed imprecations. These imprecations are not the utterance of the Spirit of God, but the Spirit of God allows them to stand as the ejaculations of human hearts; for it is the very essence of poetry that the poet should be permitted to utter himself, and the inspiration which visits him will always be seen side by side with the frailty and imperfection of his own personality.

But the missionary character of the Psalter lies not only in its forecast of the Messianic kingdom, but much more in the fulness, the richness, and the beauty with which it delineates both the deepest experiences and the most transient moods of the human soul in its relation with God. Nothing important seems to be left out. Righteousness is described in full detail, and the blessedness of the righteous is celebrated with lyrical joy. The contrition of the heart

that has sinned, the passionate cry for pardon, the bliss of being forgiven, the prayer for the Spirit to uphold, as well as to cleanse, run through the Psalter from beginning to end. The human soul that is speaking is one that has seen affliction, is frequently overwhelmed, and cleaves to the dust; but there is a present help, there is God who loves, and pities, and saves. Always in every Psalm there is God; the poet speaks of His glory, His majesty, His manifestations in nature, the law He has given, the worship of His house, His constant oversight of human affairs; but above all he speaks of God as a friend and even a lover, as a refuge, as a dwelling-place, as an overshadowing presence. Not infrequently, as the singer speaks to God, God's voice is heard in reply, and the poem becomes a dialogue between God and man. The wonder and the comfort and the joy of it are unspeakable; as the intercourse goes on, earthly troubles fade away, earthly

enemies are overcome, and even death, which at first sight seems to the singer the cessation of being, and an everlasting silence, is, like other foes, vanquished in the assurance, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thy holy one to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

And thus as the Psalter goes on, the sound of praise increases, until the closing Psalms are one prolonged Halleluiah Chorus. It is as if we had travelled through all the changing experiences of a human life, and the man who in the first Psalm is blessed because he walks in the way of the Lord, is in the last Psalm climbing the steps of the spiritual city, and joining in the praises which surround the throne.

And what is so remarkable is this, that though these Psalms are for the most part composed expressly for use in the Temple worship, the merely ritual

part of that worship, which was to pass away, is hardly referred to at all, while the spiritual realities which it symbolised seem to take its place. The keynote of the whole collection is, "Sacrifices and offerings Thou wouldest not, then said I, Lo, I come, I delight to do Thy will, O God; the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart Thou wilt not despise." Is it that poetry always spurns ritual, and finds its breath only in the open heavens of the spirit? Is it that the Psalmists were at war with the priests and the Scribes of the national religion? Is it that the Psalter must be set over against that rigid and legalistic system out of which it sprang? Of this there is no indication; such a judgment would be totally unjustified. But rather the inspired poets give the breath and inner meaning of the national institutions, that universal and eternal element which clothed itself for a time in the forms and methods of the tabernacle and the Temple, but

broke away from the old system when its day was over, to be clothed upon with the tabernacle from heaven with that universal and holy religion which was suitable to the whole world.

It would have been inconceivable beforehand how hymns could have been written in Judaism, to be sung in Christendom; how the songs of the Temple, which was to be destroyed, could be suitable to the Temple not made with hands; how a community which was thinking only of its exclusive privileges and of its superiority to the other nations of the world, could unconsciously forecast a holy King, to whom all the nations of the heathen should be given, and compose the grateful praises in which a ransomed humanity would join. But that inconceivable possibility is precisely the miracle which is realised in the Psalms, and the missionary significance of it must be plain as soon as it is pointed out.

# SUMMARY

# CHAPTER VII

## SUMMARY

After this review of the biblical literature, it may be well to reiterate what was stated beforehand. We have seen the necessity of treating the New Testament apart, and of beginning with it as the starting-point of missionary study. The message we have to deliver to the world is the New Testament, and its essentially missionary character is injuriously obscured when it is tacked on as a pendant to the far larger and more varied literature of the Old Testament. The New Testament must be not only separated, but sharply distinguished, from the Old. It must be recognised as a missionary work in a sense in which the Old could not be. The difficulty of studying the Bible for missionary

purposes has chiefly arisen from not realising this obvious truth. If Christ had come preaching the Old Testament there would have been no Gospel or good news; if He had insisted on the Jewish Law there would have been no Sermon on the Mount; if He had ratified the sacrifice of the bulls and the goats, He would not have offered Himself once for all as the sacrifice for the sins of the world. If the Apostles had gone out weighted with the Old Testament Scriptures, commissioned to preach them and not the crucified and risen Christ, it is evident that they would not have turned the world upside down. The first condition therefore of rightly using the Bible for missionary purposes, is to put the New Testament in its right place at the front, and not to weaken its effect by improperly mixing it with the Old. When that is done it stands out—so we have seen—as an essentially and absolutely missionary book; it is from first to last the announcement of a truth

which from the nature of the case must be announced to the world; it is the record of missionaries, the sole object of which is to engage all who hear to become missionaries themselves. To weaken its missionary meaning is to neutralise its whole work; and to ignore its missionary command is to reduce the whole book to an absurdity. It is not that here and there are missionary texts, injunctions, or suggestions, and that a careful student might painfully extract from certain proof-texts a defence of missionary effort; but it is that the whole book is a clear, ringing, and everlasting missionary injunction. The angel flies abroad through the heavens having the everlasting Gospel to preach; it is expressly directed to every human soul, and on every human soul that hears it is laid the obligation of passing it on to the rest. How readers of the New Testament can ever have read it without realising this, its essential characteristic, is a wonder that belongs to the mystery

of iniquity. It is as if the dark spirit that would keep the world in darkness, unable to blot out the everlasting Gospel, had succeeded in casting a veil over the eyes that read it, or had hidden it away in the mass of religious usage, tradition, and literature, until its distinctive character was obscured. Bring the New Testament out, pull down the musty buildings which are built around it, like the houses which once obscured Antwerp Cathedral, then let the winds of criticism blow around it and through it as they will: you can never prevent it from being God's great missionary message to the world, or from claiming that those who hear it should go out as His messengers, their lips touched with a coal from His altar. But we have seen that when the New Testament is placed in the forefront, we are able to strike back into the older literature with very rich results. Not only do we there find the roots of the missionary religion, but at every point of

every fibre we discover prognostications of the coming truth. The Law indicates its intention by the fact that Moses foretold a Prophet like unto himself, to whom the hopes of the people were always to be directed; the history indicated its goal from its starting-point, for the father of the race was assured that in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed; the Prophets, apparently absorbed in the instruction and chastisement of Israel, were irresistibly anticipating a spiritual Israel as wide as the world; and the poets after their kind dived into the depths of the soul and dipped into the future, with the result that all men and all times were brought under their view. And when we take the Christian Gospel with its world-wide scope as the key to unlock the treasures of the Old Testament, we find that everywhere, under the thin veils of time and circumstance, the truths which justify the missionary impulse were present. It is the strange character-

istic of the Bible that a unity pervades it which makes its several parts interpret one another, and displays the same truths with more or less completeness under differing forms. Thus, when the principles of interpretation which have occupied our attention are sufficiently understood, and we have learnt to trace the lines of historical and spiritual development through the whole, arranging the parts chronologically, in order to illustrate it we can take up the Bible where we will, and read on every page from Genesis to Revelation the missionary purpose.

The opening chapters of Genesis, for example, are very significant; the very first words, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," immediately strike the note of a universal religion. And now by the decipherment of the clay tablets from Babylonia we are able to set the stories of the Creation and of the Deluge side by side with the versions of these stories that were current in the Semitic world,

and the effect of the comparison is overpowering. In place of the mythic elements, monsters and dragons, and warring gods, there is the creative fiat of the Divine Will, and the process of creation is given in such an order that though poetic in form, it harmonises with all that science can tell of the origin and growth of things. Again, the significant story of Adam and the Fall keeps before the mind the unity and solidarity of humanity; and as in Adam all die, so immediately comes the promise of a victor and a victory over sin applying to the whole human race. The Babylonian story of Ghisdubar bears so many points of resemblance to the story of Noah and the Flood that the complete difference in the points of view is the more impressive; the Babylonian story is an epic, a literary production, aiming at no moral or religious result, but the story of Noah insists on the fact that men are one in punishment and in redemption, and spreads the

bow of promise across the earth to remind them of their common hope. These early chapters of Genesis give us the completest view of the human family, branching out into various races and nations that we anywhere obtain; and the conclusion is irresistible, that a religious book which begins with the creation of man, and surveys his spread over the globe, must contain the truths which will bring together the scattered races, and make them one in their final development as they were one at the beginning in the intention of the Creator. And so we may follow the Bible through, book by book, and almost chapter by chapter, finding the same idea impressed on every page or pushing up from beneath the surface, like the young corn in the furrows. As, rightly understood, all the Scriptures speak of Christ, so they all are burdened with His world-wide thought for the redemption of the world, and impel the devout and intelligent student to take

some part in extending the message to those who have not heard it.[1]

There are two ways by which missionary zeal is created and maintained: one, the study of the missionary facts, and the other the study of the Bible as the missionary book. Each method is indispensable. To know the Bible without knowing the efforts which are being made to spread the truth is to miss the most valuable of all commentaries upon Scripture; and commentators who ignore the work of missions, as unfortunately many of them do, make of the Bible a *hortus siccus*, because they lose the sense that it is an organism still living and at work. To trace the progress of the Gospel among savage

[1] It will be remembered how St Paul in Romans xv. cites passages from the Old Testament to show that the Gentiles would be included in the Kingdom of God. It is striking that his four citations are taken from the four sections into which we have divided the Old Testament literature. Thus, incidentally, he shows how the Law, the History, the Prophets, and the Psalms, pre-figure the missionary truth.

races or in ancient civilisation, gives new life and meaning to the New Testament;[1] the experiences of the Apostles are repeated, their difficulties and their victories, their sufferings and their miracles, are seen to be incident to the progress of the Gospel in all times. But the study of modern missions would be barren, apart from a study of the Bible, which reveals their meaning and gives them their authority. Unless they are seen to be the necessary outcome of that book, which we regard as God's supreme Word to the world, and unless the reading of that book is conducted in such a way that its whole burden seems to be, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature," the missionary enterprise must appear as an arbitrary, self-chosen diversion, a work of supererogation which,

[1] Mrs Howard Taylor's *Pastor Hsi*, for example, is an amazing commentary on the Gospel narrative, showing how the work of Christ is reproduced in China at the end of the nineteenth century.

emanating from man rather than from God, has within it no assurance or promise of success.

It is in the hope that Bible students may be enabled to intelligently discern the missionary purpose ingrained in the Scriptures, and to feel the enthusiasm which comes from seeing the great purpose of God developed through long ages of history and of religious life, that the foregoing pages have been written. No book on the study of Scripture can supersede that study, but it is sometimes given to even the simplest writer to send his reader to the Bible with new zest, to discover some of the inexhaustible treasures which are stored up in it. And if there are some Bible students who fancy that the more modern methods of handling Scripture are a ruthless desecration of the Ark of the Covenant, I trust that they may be convinced by some things which are here written, that the missionary purpose of the Bible at any rate is not likely to be

obscured by the growing practice of interpreting the book on the same principles that are applied to other literature.

"Truth is fair, shall we forego it,
Shall we cry right for a wrong?
God Himself is the best poet,
And the Real is His song."

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