THE RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLE

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To the memory of

W. Y. FULLERTON

FROM WHOSE GRACIOUS LIPS I HAVE LEARNED
SO MANY OF THE THINGS I HAVE
HERE TRIED TO SAY

PREFACE

WHAT I have tried to show in this little book is that the Bible is relevant to our modern world, which so largely ignores it, and that modern scholarship is not inimical to the spiritual understanding and use of the Bible. I should have preferred a title which expressed my conviction that it is not merely relevant to our age, but urgently relevant, and that the pressing need of the hour is for men and nations to receive the divine revelation mediated through the Bible, and culminating in the unveiling of God in Jesus Christ, and to base all their life on that revelation.

There is no pretence to completeness of treatment. I have selected a few subjects to illustrate my main thesis, and within the subjects selected I have confined myself to but a few aspects. My purpose has not been to produce a text-book of Biblical Theology, but to expound the importance of an attitude of mind to the Bible that is both scholarly and spiritual. Many subjects are entirely untreated, not because I desired to burke any issues, but because a voluminous work would only defeat its own purpose. Moreover, the discerning reader will readily perceive how I should treat those issues. My approach throughout has been non-technical, because I have not written for theologians, but for plain men and women.

Theologically I find myself much more conservative than I used to think I was. But I am persuaded that what the Creeds were trying to say in language that has little meaning for our day was fundamentally true. When I understood their language less I was more sceptical of

their thought than I became when I sought along other lines to ponder their themes. I am to-day persuaded that the Creeds are far more profoundly true than much present-day religion, which regards itself as incontestably orthodox.

Two of the chapters of this book—Chapters II and V—were delivered a few years ago as lectures to audiences in Chester under the auspices of a Committee set up by the Chester Education Committee, the first in the Cathedral and the second in the Town Hall. They have since been published in *The Congregational Quarterly* and *Religion in Education* respectively, and I have to thank the Editors of these Journals for their permission to reproduce them in revised and somewhat expanded form. I have similarly to thank the Editor of *The Baptist Quarterly* for permission to reproduce in Chapters I and III in somewhat modified form articles which have appeared in that Journal. I have retained in these chapters, and therefore have employed in the remaining chapters, the direct style of address. I have also to thank Professor Bertram Lee Woolf, at whose suggestion this book was undertaken.

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Bangor, North Wales.

CONTENTS

THE RELEVANCE OF THE BIBLE

CHAPTER I

THE CHANGING EMPHASIS IN BIBLICAL STUDIES

IT is a commonplace that no book in all the world has been subjected to such close and prolonged study as the Bible. Other religious texts, older than much of our Bible, are still extant and venerated by the devotees of other faiths. But their study has never been undertaken on the scale of Biblical study. Nor has any other book been so widely circulated, or translated into so many different tongues. Herein, not infrequently, is found testimony to the uniqueness of this Book, and its influence upon mankind.

For many centuries the study of the Bible was governed by a static conception of its inspiration, but there was an ever-moving centre of interest, according to the theological or ecclesiastical controversies of the time. Texts were regarded as alike inspired, and each side in controversy selected such as were of service and ignored all others, or sought to explain them away. Especially was this so in the period that followed the Reformation, when not only did Protestant and Catholic seek Scriptural basis for their mutual controversies, but when the various bodies of Protestants that came into being sought each to establish by the authority of the Bible the rightness of its faith and practice.

But where was the sacred and authoritative text to be found? For centuries the Latin Bible had been the Bible of the Western Church, though its text had not been standardized. Moreover, before the Reformation began, men were turning to the Hebrew and Greek Bibles and studying their text. A year before Luther nailed his theses to the door of the Wittenberg Church Erasmus had published the first edition of his Greek New Testament, and even earlier Cardinal Ximenes had printed most of the Complutensian Polyglot, which gave the Greek and Latin texts of the New Testament, and the Hebrew, Latin and Greek texts of the Old Testament, though the publication of this work was not authorized until 1520. To the Catholics the Latin Bible was the authoritative text, and the Council of Trent laid this down unequivocally, and forbade that any should presume to reject its authority on any pretext whatsoever. Thereafter a papal commission established its text in a form whose publication was alone to be sanctioned henceforth. To the Protestants, however, the Hebrew of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New were the authoritative Scriptures, and it was their text which needed to be established. Soon such other ancient versions as could be found, in addition to those printed by Cardinal Ximenes, were laid under contribution, and the great polyglot editions of the Bible, culminating in that of Brian Walton, are the enduring witness to the zeal and devotion and scholarship that were consecrated to this task. It was inspired by the faith that the words of this Book were final in controversy, and that therefore it was of supreme importance to know what were its authentic words—the words in which it was written by its Divine Author. Disagreement as to the text of Scripture, and still more controversy as to its interpretation, divided men, but there was no fundamental disagreement as to its inspiration, or as to the essential nature of that inspiration.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, the study of the Bible took on new forms, and controversies became more radical. With the rise of rationalism all the premises of the Church were questioned, and the new study of the Bible threatened the foundations of the veneration in which it had been held. The traditions as to the date and authorship of the various books were challenged one by one, books were traced back to earlier documents or split asunder and assigned to various authors, and the sense of a divine hand behind the Bible was often lost in the study of the human processes that brought it together, and it became to many a common book and a merely human document.

Not all who became the followers of the newer school of Biblical criticism were enemies of the faith, however, as their opponents too often affirmed. There were not a few who, alongside an utterly unhampered study of questions of authorship and source, retained a spirit of true reverence for the Bible. Yet it must be recognized that to many Biblical study became a matter of merely scientific investigation, the detached examination of an ancient literature, and the establishment of its text and the meaning that text had for the original writers. To understand the times in which a book was written, to think oneself back into those times, and to feel anew the impact of the words upon their first hearers, was to reach the goal of Biblical study.

Moreover, the nineteenth century saw the expansion of science, and the formulation of the Darwinian theory of evolution. In the philosophical sphere the work of Hegel had already prepared the way for this theory, but its formulation in the biological sphere brought a fresh attack on the Bible. Its scientific accuracy was discredited, and its divine origin and authority rejected. Here it was by the adaptation of the fundamental principle of development, so differently applied by Hegel

and Darwin to the philosophical and biological spheres, and its application to the religious sphere, that the answer was found. Revelation was no longer regarded as the static thing it had so long been held to be, but progress in the religion of the Bible was seen and expounded. Again, however, it must be agreed that not seldom revelation became dissolved in discovery, and in the development of religious knowledge unfolded in the Bible there was found nothing but the evolution of man on the religious side of his being.

It was inevitable that this attitude should threaten the position of Jesus in the faith of the Church. To many He became a mere moment in the religious evolution of man, a stage in the upward growth, important as introducing a new era and as a religious genius, but no more. His humanity, which had been so largely forgotten in the contemplation of His divinity, was re-emphasized to such an extent that His divinity was treated as a mere dogma, which could safely be ignored in the effort to get back to the Jesus of the first century, to see Him with the eyes of His contemporaries, and to feel the throbbing vitality of His human voice and touch.

Again, Biblical archaeology is the creation of the nineteenth century, and its discoveries in that century and expansion in the twentieth have contributed greatly to the study of the Bible. Not a little of its research has been inspired by the desire to establish the accuracy of the historical statements of the Bible, and in recent years the claim is insistently made that it does this. Seldom, however, does archaeology provide direct confirmation of historical statements found in the Bible, and its evidence often greatly complicates the task of the Biblical historian. Nevertheless, the rich and abundant material it provides is always of the greatest importance to the student of the Bible for the understanding of the

historical and cultural background of the events described in the Bible.

In recent years a new change is coming over Biblical study, whose significance is far too little perceived. The newer attitude does not reject the work of the earlier study, but seeks to conserve all that is of worth in the fruits of every approach. Yet it desires to transcend them. It accepts substantially the work of Biblical criticism, but beyond the desire to know the date and authorship of the books of the Bible and the meaning they had for their first readers, it seeks the abiding significance of the Bible, and in particular its significance for this generation. It recognizes all the human processes that went into the making of the Bible, without reducing it to the level of a merely human document, and it acknowledges that its scientific study, which is still valued and continued, is not enough. For the Bible is first and foremost a religious Book.

It must be emphasized that the many-sided work that has been done, mistaken as its emphasis has often been, is of very great importance, and every side of the work is still continued and advanced. The establishment of the text of the Bible still commands much attention, and is still far from being achieved. For the Old Testament the Hebrew text is no more infallible than the Vulgate, and a simple reliance upon the polyglot texts for the versions has long since given place to a recognition that the versions themselves, as well as the Hebrew text, have all had a history, and no longer stand before us in their original form. The study of Hebrew prosody has brought a new instrument for textual criticism. It has not seldom been used with more confidence than the insecurity of the theories that have determined its use has warranted, but its value will survive its abuse. New materials for the study of the Hebrew language are continually coming to light, and many rare forms and

words may now be understood, instead of being emended. Textual corruption must still be often enough found, and is not surprising in documents of such antiquity, but there is a less ready resort to conjectural emendation to-day, and a greater patience in threading the way through the complexities of textual criticism.

For the New Testament the problems have always been of a different order, and conjectural emendation has never been the bane of its textual criticism as in the case of the Old. Here the patient examination of the many manuscripts, and their grouping into classes, with the minute study of the relations within and between the groups, have brought fresh materials for the establishment of the text. The intensive study of the versions here also yields fruits for textual criticism, though the situation is so different from that of the Old Testament, since here no manuscripts are extant of any version antedating by centuries the oldest known manuscripts in the original language. Rich finds of papyri have added greatly to our knowledge of the Greek *Koine*, and have brought much light for the understanding of words and forms in the New Testament.

On none of this work is there any disposition to turn the back. Its importance is fully recognized, but not over-estimated. Even if we could establish with certainty the exact text of the Old and New Testaments, and had perfect philological knowledge of every word and form they contained, we should still need other equipment before we could understand the message of God to men embodied in the Bible. For the Bible is, primarily and fundamentally, God's word to man, and through all its human processes of authorship and transmission there is a divine process. Its recognition is not new, indeed, but it is claiming a more central place in Biblical study, and it is this that constitutes the most significant change of recent years.

The newer attitude still recognizes the clear marks of progress in the Biblical revelation, yet it does not reduce revelation to discovery. It does not cease to be interested in the development of religion, but its centre of interest is not in man, but in God. It does not find the story of man's growth in the understanding of God of such absorbing interest that it becomes an end in itself, but rather seeks to perceive in every stage of the process that which is enduringly true of God. It is for this reason that there is a revived interest in the Theology of the Old Testament, as against the development of the religion of Israel. This does not mean the eclipse of the historical sense, but the perception that through the historical development the nature, will and purpose of God were being unfolded, and that only in their light can the development be rightly understood. It is for this reason that the Old Testament, itself so essential to the understanding of the New, can never be fully understood without the New. There is a theology of the Old Testament distinct from the theology of the New, yet the one cannot be properly understood without the other. It is unnecessary to read back the New Testament into the Old, or to obscure the differences between them, but it is necessary to recognize that the Theology of the New Testament is rooted in the Theology of the Old, while the Theology of the Old Testament reaches its full fruition in that of the New.

No longer, therefore, do we suppose that when we have understood words as their first hearers understood them we have achieved the goal of Biblical study. Too often hearing they heard not, and even those who uttered the words can have perceived less of their implications than we should. Magna Carta should have a fuller meaning to us, who look back on a thousand years of the unfolding freedom to which it led, than it could have had to those who framed it. And so the work of

Moses and Elijah and Paul lay not alone in what it was in itself, but in what it has continued to achieve in ages far beyond their horizons.

So is it, too, with the Person of Jesus. The emphasis on His true humanity may be welcomed, without lessening the perception of His true divinity. We can read the Gospels and see Him a real man amongst men, without falling into the lamentable error of supposing that when we have seen Him with the eyes of His contemporaries, we have seen Him as He was. What we see depends on the eyes we look with, as well as on that whereon we look, and they who looked on Jesus but as the Carpenter of Galilee, albeit as a singularly gracious and inspiring personality, but who did not see in Him the Son of God, saw less than we may see.

Again, the newer attitude welcomes the light that archaeology brings to the understanding of the Bible, but it finds real peril in the attempt to turn it to the establishment of the historical trustworthiness of the Bible. That the Bible has a far greater measure of historical trustworthiness than any other literature of comparable antiquity can be established without difficulty, but it is quite impossible to establish the historical inerrancy of the Bible. Nor can archaeology be said in any sense to establish such inerrancy. All the material that archaeology provides is to be welcomed, and carefully sifted and examined, and all the light that it can shed on the Bible is to be gladly accepted. Wherever its evidence tends to confirm the trustworthiness or credibility of Biblical statements, it is to be welcomed; but where its evidence goes clearly against Biblical statements, or creates new difficulties for the Biblical historian, this is to be frankly recognized. But it is not to be forgotten that the Bible is not a historical textbook, but a religious book, through which God speaks to men. Any understanding which misses this is inade-

quate and incomplete, and it is perilous to encourage men to read it for what it is not, instead of for what it is.

The newer attitude to the Bible is therefore marked by the utmost frankness and the fullest scholarship. But it perceives that no merely intellectual understanding of the Bible, however complete, can possess all its treasures. It does not despise such an understanding, for it is essential to a complete understanding. But it must lead to a spiritual understanding of the spiritual treasures of this Book if it is to become complete. And for that spiritual understanding something more than intellectual alertness is necessary. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and the Bible student needs an attitude of spiritual receptivity, an eagerness to find God that he may yield himself to Him, if he is to pass beyond his scientific study into the richer inheritance of this greatest of all books.

It will be perceived that none of the elements of this attitude is in itself new. What is growingly characteristic of present-day Biblical study is the synthesis of these elements. There have always been those who have read the Bible as the Word of God, with eager desire to understand its spiritual message to their own hearts. But most of these have had little use for many of the lines of modern study, and have retained the older view of inspiration. On the other hand, it is undeniable that there has been a scholarship which has been so exclusively scientific that it has shown no spiritual quality. This has never fully represented Biblical scholarship, though it has often involved it in reproach. To-day it is quite unrepresentative of scholarship, with its fuller recognition of the religious quality of the Bible, and its desire not alone to recover ancient situations, cultures and beliefs, but to find behind and through them the One unchanging God, revealing Himself in all the

Scripture, and unfolding His holy will and purpose for mankind. This ancient Book is God's word to us, relevant to the modern world and to our hearts. We do it no honour when we bring to it closed minds; still less do we honour it when we come to it with closed hearts. All the intellectual acuteness, honesty and candour, on which insistence is so often laid, are to be desired; but with them that spiritual penetration, which is given to the pure in heart, blended with them in a single approach to this incomparable Book.

CHAPTER II

THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE

THE older view of inspiration, to which reference has already been made, regarded God as solely responsible for every statement in the Bible, and maintained that its divine origin guaranteed it against all error. Such a view was never free from difficulties, but modern scholarship has made it quite untenable, and there are not a few who fear that its abandonment means the abandonment of any real belief in the inspiration of the Bible. They therefore cling to the old view, and regard scholarship as the enemy of faith. It is easy to scoff at such an attitude and to call it by hard names, easy to observe that the faith that needs thus to protect itself cannot be sure of itself and that ultimately faith cannot be saved by the abandonment of the intellect. It is more important, however, to show that the flame of faith, precious even when it is weak, is not really menaced by true scholarship. This is not done merely by saying, as is not seldom said, that while modern scholarship has made impossible the old view of inspiration, it does not threaten a truer view of inspiration, and that while our view of the character of inspiration must differ from that of our fathers, we may still firmly recognize the reality of inspiration. To deny the older connotation of the term, while continuing to use it in some vague and unspecified sense, is an offence alike against faith and intellect, and the obligation is laid upon us to redefine the term, and to justify our definition at the bar of reason. In the present chapter, therefore, some

attempt will be made to do this, and to set forth the general principles in the light of which any particular passage of the Bible is to be studied.

That the older view encountered grave difficulties, quite apart from any that modern scholarship has created or revealed, needs little demonstration. It conceived the human authors of the Bible as passive instruments in the hands of God, acting wholly under His control, and producing a book for whose every statement its Divine Author was responsible. On such a view, the least error or contradiction becomes of grave importance, for if the Bible is wholly of God, its complete inerrancy should be beyond challenge. Yet no one can read carefully the books of Samuel and Kings and the books of Chronicles without finding a whole series of glaring contradictions. For instance, 1 Kings xv. 11, 14 says: "And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord. . . . But the high places were not taken away," whereas 2 Chron. xiv. 2, 5 says: "And Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. . . . Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places."[1] We find a similar contradiction in the case of Jehoshaphat in 1 Kings xxii. 43 and 2 Chron. xvii. 6. A more familiar contradiction is found between 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, which states that the Lord moved David to number the people, and 1 Chron. xxi. 1, which attributes this to Satan. Again, 2 Sam. xxiv. 24 says that David bought the threshing-floor and oxen of Araunah for fifty shekels of silver, while 1 Chron. xxi. 25 names the price as six hundred shekels of gold.

Nor are the difficulties of this kind limited to cases of disagreement between passages in the books of Chronicles and passages elsewhere. Sometimes disagree-

[1] It may be noted that 2 Chron. xv. 17 repeats the statement of 1 Kings xv. 14, in disagreement with 2 Chron. xiv. 5.

ments are found in one and the same book, even in narratives that lie side by side, or within what appears to be a single narrative, and the frank recognition of their existence makes it quite impossible to ascribe to God the responsibility for every statement found in Scripture. A single familiar instance may be given. In 1 Sam. xvi. 18 ff. we read that Saul's servants brought to him David, the son of Jesse the Bethlehemite, whose skilful playing was calculated to soothe the king when his fits of depression came on him. David is said to have been a skilled warrior at that time, and when the king saw him he "loved him greatly", and made him his armour-bearer. In the following chapter we find that Israel is at war with the Philistines, but the king's armour-bearer is far from the royal camp, tending his father's sheep in the field. When he comes to the camp, it is not to attend the king, but to bring food to his brothers, and his eldest brother chides him for coming in terms that do not suggest that an experienced warrior is being addressed. When David hears the challenge of Goliath, and goes forth to answer it, Saul fails to recognize him, and inquires of Abner, his commander-in-chief, whose son the youth is, and when, after the battle, David is brought into Saul's presence, the king asks him the same question. Clearly, therefore, the king wholly failed to recognize one who is represented as having been already his armour-bearer. And lest it should be thought that it is merely a matter of arrangement, and that what was really an earlier incident in the life of David is recorded out of its chronological order, 1 Sam. xviii. 2 tells us that Saul took David on the day of the killing of Goliath, and "would let him go no more home to his father's house". Clearly we have two quite different and irreconcilable accounts of the introduction of David to the court of Saul. The one represents him as having first come to court when he was a youth too young to be

expected to take part in battle, as a result of his encounter with Goliath; the other represents him as having been introduced to Saul by his own courtiers as a musician, when he had already had some experience of warfare, and was therefore too old to be rebuked for appearing on a battle-field.

Resort is sometimes had to the suggestion that the Bible does not lie before us in its original form, and that it was the lost original form which was the inerrant work of God. That the Bible does not lie before us in its original form may be readily agreed, and something has already been said about the difficulty of recovering the original text. That the present Hebrew text of the Old Testament is in many places corrupt is undeniable, and the same may be said of the Greek and Latin versions, and of all the other versions that have been made. Clearly, therefore, if there once existed an inerrant text as the direct handiwork of God, its Divine Author did not think it of importance to preserve it; and once it is admitted that the Bible now in our hands cannot be relied on to give the authentic word of God, the whole basis of the older appeal to it has gone. Nor should it be forgotten that the cases of manifest disagreement are rarely found in passages where there is reason to suppose that textual corruption has taken place.

In what sense, then, can we regard the Bible as inspired? It is sometimes said that the older view regarded the Bible as the Word of God, whereas the modern view is that it *contains* the Word of God. I regard this as a quite inadequate statement. To me the Bible *is* the Word of God. This does not mean that in all its parts it attains a uniform level of revelation, or that we are justified in thinking that because a passage is in the Bible it gives us exact knowledge of history or science, or absolute insight into the nature and will of God. Christ alone is the Word of God that gives perfect insight into His nature

and will, for in Him alone is the absolute revelation of the heart of God.

The writers of the Bible were real men, responsible for their writings as we are for ours. The Word of God is mediated to us through the instrument of their personality. God, being personal, cannot adequately reveal Himself save through personality, and can only reveal Himself perfectly in perfect personality. That is why the Incarnation was necessary for the full revelation of God. It is not something wholly other than the revelation of God in the Old Testament, but its climax and crown. God's perfect Word is in Christ, Who was perfect in Himself, and perfect in His accord with the divine will. Through others the Word was obscured to some extent by the medium through which it passed, but through Him and through them it came through personality. If we pass light through a piece of glass, the result will be affected not merely by the character of the light that falls on the glass, but also by the character of the glass. The light is not derived from the glass through which it passes, but it is modified by it, unless the glass is flawless and colourless. The whole light that emerges from the glass is to be ascribed to the source, yet equally the whole light may have a quality which the glass has communicated to it. In the same way divine revelation that comes through the organ of human personality depends for its character, not merely on the God Who is the sole source of the revelation, but on the organ through which it comes to us. Were the writers of the Old Testament helpless instruments in the hand of God, completely controlled by Him, the revelation would be independent of their personality, but if they were imperfect and fallible, then their imperfections and fallibilities could not but affect the revelation.

It will be seen that I am far from proposing a view which is all too common, that the writers of the Old

Testament by their own reflection and skill and penetrating insight saw what they did see of the heart of God, and recorded what they had seen. In particular, it is often supposed that the prophets were men of serious spirit and clear judgement, who meditated on the conditions of their day and saw the sickness of society, and who sized up the world situation of their times, and who then based on this what they had to say to men. While all of this is doubtless true to a point, it is wholly inadequate. The prophets would have been the last to claim that it was by their own wisdom and insight that they reached their message, and would have rejected with indignation such an analysis of their work. Their word was ever "Thus saith the Lord", and they firmly believed that the word they uttered was God's word to their fellows. They were indeed men of sagacity and insight, men who meditated profoundly on human affairs, but they were also men who had a great experience of God, who penetrated some of the secrets of God's heart, and who looked on the world in the light of what they had seen of God. Nor did this vision of God's heart come merely from their own effort. It was of the grace of God that they received it, and it came to them through revelation, as they freely acknowledged. It was God's act, and not merely theirs.

Why, then, was the revelation partial? Why did not God reveal Himself perfectly at the very beginning of history? It is easy to say, as we have said, that God could not speak His perfect Word to men through the personalities of imperfect men. But why could He not reveal Himself fully *to* even imperfect men? For surely here was an immediate process. If the Old Testament writers were men who lived with God, who by the grace of God were admitted to some of the secrets of His heart, why could they not have been admitted to fuller understanding? Was it that God did not reveal Himself

perfectly to them because He deliberately withheld something? Nay, indeed. The obstacles to fuller revelation were not on the side of God. He was ever willing to reveal Himself, but He could not. For the measure of His revelation was conditioned by the capacity of the receiver. In material things it is true that power to give is conditioned partly by power to receive. With the best will in the world it is impossible to put a quart of milk into a pint bottle. In the intellectual world the same thing holds. Try to explain the theory of probability or the differential calculus to a child of six. You cannot—not, perhaps, because you are unwilling, but because the child could not grasp it. And in the world of the spirit the same truth holds. But here it is not intellectual ability that is the condition of illumination, but spiritual receptiveness, and even God Himself could only communicate Himself to men in so far as their spiritual maturity enabled them to receive Him.

The same truth may be expressed in a different, yet equally familiar way. What we see depends not merely on what is before us, but on the mind which looks out through our eyes; and that is to say on the experience which lies behind us. The artist, the geologist and the botanist may look on the same landscape and see quite different things, though Nature offers equally to them all the same revelation of her treasures. And men who have lived with God have perceived different things in His heart, not because of any limitation which He has imposed upon them, but because of the limitations of their own soul. The perfect revelation could only be given through the perfect personality; it could equally be given only to the perfect personality. Hence, when the perfect revelation was given in Christ, it was not given in equal measure through Him to all, but only in the measure of their capacity to apprehend it. To some

He was merely "the carpenter's son"; to others a blasphemer and a peril; to others the effulgence of the divine glory. Yet of those who have found in Him the effulgence of the divine glory there is none who would claim to have exhausted the treasures of the revelation of God in Him, and they who have most largely entered into those treasures are the pure in heart, whose soul is most closely attuned to His.

So was it, too, with those through whom the revelation of the Old Testament was given. Not only did their failings mar the word which God spake through them, and prevent the perfect revelation reaching men by their means, but those same failings marred their own vision of Him. They had false ideas of God and cherished false hopes, and these false ideas and false hopes dimmed their eyes. They could neither receive nor communicate the perfect Word of God.

This can perhaps be illustrated by one or two examples from the Old Testament. In 2 Sam. vi we have the story of David's abortive attempt to bring the Ark into Jerusalem. The Ark was placed upon a cart, drawn by oxen, which were driven by Uzzah and his brother. As the cart was going up the steep incline into the city, over the rough and uneven road, the oxen stumbled and the cart was tilted. Uzzah put out his hand to the Ark, and we are told that the anger of the Lord blazed forth against him and slew him on the spot. That Uzzah died cannot be doubted, but that his death was due to divine anger could only be inference, and the inference may be rejected with the fullest confidence.

The account of the incident given by the Chronicler would seem to imply that it was because Uzzah was not a Levite that this *contretemps* happened. For it is there recorded that on the second occasion when an attempt, this time successful, was made to bring the Ark into

Jerusalem, David was careful to employ Levites to carry it, and it is stated explicitly in 1 Chron. xv. 13 that David recognized that the mishap was due to the non-employment of Levites on the first occasion. According to the Pentateuchal law, as it now stands before us, none but Levites should approach the Ark, and certainly Uzzah was no Levite. Was it, then, because Uzzah, despite the fact that he was not a Levite, presumed to touch the sacred Ark that he called down divine wrath upon himself?

Many considerations show quite conclusively that this was not the reason. In the first place, the Ark had been kept in the house of Uzzah's father for many years, without calling down divine wrath. In the second place, since by even the Chronicler's admission no Levites were employed on this occasion, the Ark must have been placed on the cart by non-Levites. Yet no divine anger vented itself immediately upon them. Further, when David decided to desist from the attempt to take the Ark into Jerusalem, he placed it in the house of Obed-Edom, the Gittite, but so far from divine anger being shown for this breach of the Law, marked blessing came to Obed-Edom. Moreover, it is clear from the account in 2 Sam. vi that David was quite at a loss to understand the mishap, and even when the Ark was moved the second time, and successfully brought into Jerusalem, the account there says nothing whatever of the Levites. It does, however, show that David was careful not to employ a cart on that occasion, but to have the Ark carried.

It is clear that if we judge the incident from the standpoint of the Pentateuchal law, as we now have it, the whole proceeding was in flagrant violation of the law at many points, and it is equally clear that David would be the person responsible for the violation. It would be quite alien to the character of God to blaze forth against

Uzzah because, having been wrongly put by the king in charge of the Ark, he endeavoured to discharge his duty. This last consideration may seem at first to be a purely subjective one, but to this we shall return below, to show that it rests on a more solid basis.

Modern Pentateuchal criticism, of course, assigns the regulations concerning the Ark, to which reference has been made, to the latest strand of the Pentateuch, dating from a time long subsequent to the age of David. This explains why David was conscious of no wrong in entrusting Uzzah with the task, and Uzzah of none in undertaking it, and accounts for David's complete ignorance of the reason for the death of Uzzah, as well as for the lack of any indication in the narrative of 2 Sam. vi that his being a non-Levite had anything to do with it. But at the moment I am only concerned to argue that quite apart from modern criticism the explanation of the incident offered in the Biblical sources reflects men's false ideas of God, rather than the authentic revelation of His will.

It is not, indeed, clear exactly what happened, or how Uzzah was killed, but that his death in some way immediately followed his attempt to support the Ark can scarcely be doubted. The Ark was so closely associated with God in the minds of the Israelites that Uzzah's death was immediately attributed to the activity of God, just as when, in the days of Samuel, the Ark was carried on to the battlefield of Aphek, the Philistines said: "God is come into the camp" (1 Sam. iv. 7). It was their own preconceptions which made them interpret the fatal mishap which Uzzah suffered as the proof of God's anger. But if the character of God is unchanging, then it can never have been true that He blazed forth in anger against a man for the wholly praiseworthy act of trying to prevent the Ark which had been entrusted to him from falling. Yet not only did the people and

David believe this, but it is clear that the writers of the books of Samuel and Chronicles believed it too.

To take another case, in 2 Sam. xxi we read that there was a famine in the reign of David. The king inquired through the sacred oracle as to the cause of the famine, and received the answer that it was due to Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites some years before. We have no record of Saul's slaughter of the Gibeonites, unless, as many believe, we should identify Nob (1 Sam. xxii. 19) with Gibeon. But apparently at some point in his reign Saul had slain Gibeonites. David therefore summoned the Gibeonites, and asked what satisfaction they desired. Thereupon they asked for seven of Saul's descendants to be given to them to be hanged. David immediately granted their request, and they were hanged, and their bodies left for the birds of prey to devour. And then we have the haunting picture of Rizpah, Saul's concubine, going out to keep watch over those bodies night and day through all the period of harvest, suffering neither birds of prey by day, nor prowling beasts by night, to touch the corpses. And we read that after that God suffered Himself to be entreated, and the famine passed.

Can this, again, ever have been true to the character of God? Can He really have desired this, or have found any satisfaction in it? Here, once more, we find flagrant violation of the law of Deuteronomy, where we read: "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers" (Deut. xxiv. 16). But this time the violation, instead of drawing down divine wrath, appeases it. On the older view that the whole of the Pentateuch was written by Moses, therefore, we have here the divine approval of a breach of a divinely given law. There can be nothing sacrosanct about a view which requires us so to dishonour God.

Again, however, modern criticism has established that the book of Deuteronomy was not yet written in the time of David, and its provisions were therefore unknown to David and the Gibeonites. We cannot charge them, therefore, with any breach of a law which was not yet delivered. But even so the theological problem remains, until we recognize that this incident in no way reflected the true will of God. For to suppose that God once delighted in what He afterwards prohibited would be to suppose that God Himself had developed, and however progress in revelation is to be explained, it cannot be by so spiritually revolting a view. It can never have been true that God suddenly, years after Saul's evil act, and even after the death of Saul, brought famine upon a nation because of that act, and was appeased by the barbarous sacrifice of innocent victims. It is easier to believe that men falsely thought that this was His character, that they were blinded by their own prejudices and foolish thoughts, and that they wrongly ascribed to Him what was alien to His heart.

But does not this mean that we are taking away from the objective character of the revelation, and substituting a purely subjective test for what is of God and what is not? By what principle shall we determine whether, when we read that God demanded a certain action from men, He did really demand it, or whether they but misunderstood His demand? By what principle shall we determine whether, when the prophet says "Thus saith the Lord", it is really the authentic word of God, or whether it is but the partially understood and imperfectly transmitted message of God? Is it not much easier to accept the Old Testament in a plain, unvarnished way, as it stands, than to establish canons of differentiation? By no means. That way, as I have shown, is spiritually unsatisfying, since it involves dishonouring God. God is one and unchanging in character, and His

character is perfectly revealed in Christ. If His actions or His demands were ever inconsistent with His character as revealed in Christ, then they were unworthy of Him. Any other view than this threatens the foundations of religion far more seriously than does the modern view of the Bible. Nor does this substitute a purely subjective standard for the objective character of revelation. It substitutes as the standard the revelation given in Christ. All that we learn of God in the Old Testament that is in harmony with the revelation given in Christ is truly of God; it came to men by divine revelation, for without revelation man cannot attain to the knowledge of God. And all that we learn of God in the Old Testament that is not in harmony with the revelation given in Christ is not of God. It represents the misunderstanding of God by sincere men, whose view was distorted by the eyes through which they looked upon Him.

By this test we may establish that the story of Uzzah presents a false view of God. For in the days of our Lord men still cherished the view which appears in that story, and regarded a fatal accident as the proof of divine anger, and He repudiated it. Men came to Him and told Him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the sacrifices. And He replied: "Think ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans? . . . I tell you, Nay. Or those eighteen, upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and killed them, think ye that they were offenders above all the men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay" (Luke xiii. 2 ff.). If such a view of God was false in the first century of our era, it was equally false in the time of David.

May we not, then, hold that the Old Testament is an encumbrance to religion, and that it were better deleted from the Bible of the Church? If the revelation of the Old Testament must be tested by the revelation in

Christ, would it not be better to discard the Old Testament? Assuredly not. It belonged to the Bible of the Church from the very beginning, before there was a New Testament, and without it much of the New Testament would be unintelligible. For the New Testament is the crown and culmination of a long historical process, in the light of which alone it can be understood. While it provides the standard by which the Old Testament must be tested, the Old Testament is equally necessary to its complete understanding. Beyond this, the Old Testament is an unrivalled treasury of spiritual experience, speaking authentic and enduring messages from God. Its narratives need to be rightly understood, but given that understanding they may minister greatly to the strength and richness of spiritual life.

In calling the New Testament the crown of a long historical process, I have implied that there was progress in revelation. At the same time I have rejected the idea that there was progress in God, or in God's willingness to reveal Himself. What limited the revelation was not God's willingness to give, but man's capacity to receive, for He could only reveal Himself to men in so far as they were spiritually able and willing to receive His revelation. And here I would repudiate afresh the half-truth which is so common, when it is said that the Old Testament is the record of man's search for God. In revolt against the older idea that the Old Testament is a purely supernatural book, every statement of which is guaranteed by its divine author, not a few have regarded it as a purely human document, reflecting man's gropings after God, and growth in understanding of Him. But this falls seriously short of the truth. No good teacher would attribute the progress of a distinguished pupil solely to his own teaching skill, nor would the pupil show wisdom in attributing it solely to his own intelligence and diligence. In sound education there must be co-operation

between the teacher and the pupil. So with the process of revelation. Man's search for God and God's reaching out to man are two sides of a single process, and the process is gravely misrepresented if but one side is considered. Man could never by the mere exercise of his own powers attain unto the knowledge of God, unless God were willing to give Himself unto him. But on the other hand, God could not thrust the knowledge of Himself upon men. It is of His grace that He is ever seeking to give Himself unto them, but He can do so only in so far as they can and will receive Him. And even their capacity to receive Him is itself His gift, which grows by its exercise.[1]

The Old Testament is therefore neither a purely divine nor a merely human document. There are divine and human factors woven together in it, and I would prefer to say, not that it is the record of man's progressive search for God, but that it is the record of man's growing experience of God, and progressive response to God. As such, it is a religious book of inestimable value.

It is clear that on this view the inconsistencies which are found in the Bible no longer provide any stumbling-block. I remember a Chinese Christian coming to me once in great distress. He had read in Stephen's speech in Acts vii how Stephen said that Abraham "came out of the land of the Chaldaeans, and dwelt in Haran: and from thence, when his father was dead, God removed him into this land, wherein ye now dwell" (vii. 4). But he had read in Gen. xi. 26 that Terah lived seventy years and begat Abram, Nahor and Haran, and in Gen. xii. 4 that Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. But Gen. xi. 32 says that Terah lived to be two hundred and five years old. According to these passages, therefore, Abram departed

[1] Cf. Eph. ii. 8: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

from Haran some sixty years before his father's death, and not "when his father was dead". The good man was in great trouble about this discrepancy, simply because he had been taught an untenable view of inspiration. He had been taught to regard God as responsible for the exact form of all these texts, and the inconsistency meant to him that the Bible was not reliable, God was not reliable, and the foundations of his faith were rocking under him.

But if inspiration works, not by the suspension of human personality, but by the organ of human personality, and if human and divine factors are woven together in it, then we may be prepared to find errors and inconsistencies, as well as imperfect views of God, without at the same time ceasing to find God's living Word in and through it. The errors and the imperfections we find in no sense challenge the foundation of our faith, for that rests, not on our view of inspiration, but on a living experience of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

In the same way, our view of inspiration frees us to examine without prejudice and without fear the processes by which the books of the Old Testament grew, without leading us to regard them as common, or making us cease to find in them the revelation of God. We can find without being disturbed, for instance, two accounts of the setting up of the monarchy in Israel, dominated by quite different attitudes towards the institution of the monarchy, without failing to find a religious value in both.

Similarly with Old Testament prophecy. We can recognize quite frankly that many of the prophecies of the Old Testament have never been fulfilled, and can yet find the study of the prophets spiritually satisfying. For instance, we read in Jer. li. 11: "The Lord hath stirred up the spirit of the kings of the Medes; because

his device is against Babylon, to destroy it". In the same chapter the kings of the Medes are called upon to prepare themselves against Babylon, and verse 29 declares that "the purposes of the Lord against Babylon do stand, to make the land of Babylon a desolation, without inhabitant". Similarly, Isa. xiii. 17 ff. says: "Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them (i.e. against the people of Babylon) . . . and their bows shall dash the young men in pieces; and they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldaeans' pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah". None of this was fulfilled. Before Babylon fell, the Median kingdom fell, having been conquered by Cyrus, who added it to his kingdom. When the Babylonian empire fell, it fell to Cyrus, and not to the Medes. Moreover, it fell without bringing the horrors of war upon the city itself. There was a battle at Opis, and within a few days of Cyrus's victory there, Babylon was yielded to him without a siege or struggle. So far from the city being sacked, the transfer was entirely peaceable, and deeds of contract for the sale of property continued to be drawn up. So far from the city being made desolate, and without inhabitant, or treated like Sodom and Gomorrah, Cyrus made it his capital, in which he resided for a large part of every year.

So long as we regard prophecy as a wholly supernatural prediction of events, under the complete control of God, a single such instance is disquieting. But if we hold that there was in the prophet a gift of divine illumination, which came to him from God, but that the form of his message owed something to himself, we are not surprised to find his presentation of a true message from God marked also with his own unjustified expectations. And that is what we find here. The fundamental

heart of the message was fulfilled. The Babylonian empire was indeed doomed, as these prophets said. They wrongly identified the conquering power; they wrongly outlined the details of the fall. But the essence of their word was justified.

A greater example may be found in Jeremiah's prophecies concerning his own people. When he began his ministry, hordes of Scythian nomads were moving down through Syria, ravaging and destroying, and spreading terror before them. And Jeremiah's vision of the cauldron blown from the north seems to have had relation to that situation. And the prophet thought God was going to use the instrument of the Scythians to visit on Judah her sins, and he issued his prophecy of impending doom. But the Scythians passed down the coast road to the borders of Egypt. There the Pharaoh persuaded them by a large gift to refrain from entering Egypt, and they returned northwards, leaving Jeremiah a discredited prophet. Twenty years later, the Egyptian army met the army of Nebuchadrezzar at Carchemish, and was defeated and fled homewards, being hotly pursued by Nebuchadrezzar and his army. Again Jeremiah appears to have believed that this new peril from the north was to bring the divine judgement upon his people, but Nebuchadrezzar, like the Scythians, went by Judah to the borders of Egypt, where he received news of his father's death, and turned round and hurried back to Babylon as fast as he could. Again, therefore, Jeremiah was discredited. He seems to have been deeply concerned himself at the non-fulfilment of his prophecies. He had not wanted to prophesy disaster. Indeed, he dreaded the thought of it. Yet he had felt an irresistible inner constraint to utter the word. And then it was not fulfilled. And he cried out against God, roundly declaring that He had deceived him, and made him a laughing-stock. Often he vowed within himself that he would

prophesy no more, but no sooner had he done so than he felt as it were a fire burning in his bones, that could not be contained, and he had to burst forth into prophecy again. Twenty years after Nebuchadrezzar had first marched through Syria, his armies were on the march again, this time against Jerusalem. Once in the meanwhile he had moved his columns against the city, and had carried captive many of its people. But now he was coming to stamp out a fresh rising of western states, notable amongst which was Judah. Again Jeremiah prophesied doom. And this time doom fell upon the city of Jerusalem, complete and appalling.

And now it was clear that throughout Jeremiah had not been so wrong as it had appeared. God had been more long-suffering than he had imagined, and the nation had had forty years more grace than he had at first supposed possible. He had mistaken the time and the manner of the judgement, but he had not mistaken its certainty. The nation that was flouting God in all its life, both public and private, that was basing all its life on principles alien to His will, must bring disaster upon itself, and even the divine love had no means of exposing its folly but by letting it drink the bitter cup of experience. So again there was a fundamentally sound message ringing through Jeremiah's words, though he had clothed the message in a form which was not wholly true.

But of what importance is it all to us? What have Israel's history, and Israel's sins and Israel's sufferings to do with our modern world? Nothing, if that were all. But the Old Testament is not merely, or even primarily, an historical record. It is more concerned with the enduring lessons of history than with history itself. And the message of the Old Testament writers, while it was always a message addressed primarily to their own people and their own times, and related to the circumstances,

the thought and the outlook of their contemporaries, was also the expression of timeless principles, which are of abiding value to men.

Take even so unpromising a story as that of Saul's war with the Amalekites, recorded in 1 Sam. xv. Here we read that Samuel went to Saul and said that because, some centuries earlier, the Amalekites had been unfriendly to the Israelites, it was God's will that Saul should now make an attack upon them, and exterminate the whole race. It is impossible for us to suppose that God could really commend such principles, for their application to our modern world would speedily reduce it to a shambles. We do not need to suppose that this was the authentic voice of God, but rather that it was an expression of ideas that were current in Israel in those days. Often in a campaign, either at its opening battle, or in some particularly critical engagement, Israel would vow beforehand that the entire enemy forces and all their material treasure would be destroyed as an act of sacrifice to God. The same practice was also current among Israel's neighbours, and it doubtless rested on the belief that such a vow would be likely to stimulate the nation's god to do his utmost to ensure victory. So Samuel, speaking as he believed, and as Saul believed, in the name of God, commanded Saul to go and treat the Amalekites in this fashion. But though Saul won the victory, he did not carry out the ban. He spared the king of the Amalekites, and the choicest of the spoil, and returned home. And Samuel's anger blazed against Saul, who tried to defend himself by saying he intended to offer the spared spoil in sacrifice at the sanctuary. This excuse Samuel brushed aside with the great word "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (xv. 22). Here is an authentic word of God, even from the midst of this unpromising passage, enunciating an enduring

principle. Had Saul spared any of the spoil because he doubted whether God did really love this wholesale destruction, or recoiled from the indiscriminate slaughter because he could not believe it was really the will of God that it should take place, we could have respected him. He stands self-condemned because he was false to his own beliefs, because, while persuaded that God delighted in the ban, and that he was divinely commanded to put it to execution, he failed to do so at the call of nothing higher than selfishness. It is for us to translate that enduring principle into the terms of our own life, our own experience, and our own beliefs.

There is another feature, of enduring significance, that stands out again and again in the records. It is that religious advance came time and again through the private experience of some individual, that the men who gave God's word to Israel constantly received their message through their own personal experience. Three familiar examples of this may suffice.

Moses in Egypt saw the wrongs his people suffered with growing indignation, until one day he slew an Egyptian. Then he fled to the desert. It is inconceivable that he whose exile was born of his sympathy for his suffering brethren did not often think of them in the wilderness, and brood over their sufferings. And one day there was born in his heart the certainty that a God Whose very name was unknown to his people was setting His seal on the sympathy of his heart, and sending him into Egypt to lead the people out. This was a new and incredible thing in the world. For a God to adopt a people, weak and persecuted, and to deliver them, was a thing unknown. But Moses responded to the call, which came along lines so much in accord with the sympathy of his own heart, and the result was the Covenant of Sinai, when the people in solemn gratitude pledged themselves to the God Who had rescued them.

Hosea, faced with a tragedy that would have broken the faith of most men, found a deeper faith. His wife was faithless, and though he loathed her faithlessness and sin with all his soul, he could not cease to love her. The very depth of his love increased the agony he endured, and by the agony he endured he found a new understanding of the heart of God, and perceived that it was supremely a heart of love.

Jeremiah, the loneliest of men, persecuted by his own family, a laughing-stock to the people, a traitor in the eyes of the court, excluded from the Temple, imprisoned in a foul dungeon, found a deeper intimacy with God, and realized more fully than any other Old Testament character the rich meaning of prayer. And he, more than any other, insisted that the true character of religion is inner, and that it consists not in outer rites and ceremonies, but in the inner purity of the spirit, while the real covenant is not that written on stone, but that written on the living tables of personality.

Here we see, so to speak, the process of inspiration. It was not a case of the writer's hand being supernaturally controlled to write words that came to him wholly from without. It was a case of men who, by the submissiveness to God with which they faced their experience, found something that far transcended in its significance the circle of their own experience. The process was not, of course, always the same. God's methods of approach are infinitely varied. But the examples at which we have looked sufficiently illustrate the principle that inspiration came, not by the suspension of personality, but through the organ of personality; that the message it brought was never unrelated to the writer's own thought and outlook, but always closely related to it; and that the form into which he cast the message owed much to him, and was not, therefore, a perfect Word of

God. Yet in so far as it was the Word of God, it was of abiding significance.

They who would understand the Old Testament must read it for what it is, and not for what it is not, must read its stories, not as exact records of history, inerrant in every detail, or as authoritative revelations of the future, or even as wholly trustworthy revelations of God, but rather as the experiences and thoughts of men who reached out after God, and responded to God's reaching out after them—or sometimes, indeed, closed their lives against God—and who, in the measure of their sincerity and the purity of their heart found Him, and into the inheritance of whose experience we have come. That is why we cherish their memory. We do not in superior contempt smile upon them because they did not attain all that has been granted to us. Rather do we humbly acknowledge that of ourselves, had we begun with their inheritance, we had not attained all that they did. Many have failed to learn the lessons of their experience, have failed to receive or to communicate the things that God sought to say to them, and through them to others. But the writers of the Old Testament, in the measure of their obedience to the vision of God given unto them, made possible for themselves, and for those who inherited from them, a larger vision.

Most of what has so far been said has concerned primarily or exclusively the Old Testament. But what of the New Testament? Can this be absolutely relied on to give the Word of God in a form whose every detail may be unquestioningly accepted? Is the process of inspiration different in the New Testament from that of the Old, or is this, too, mediated through fallible human personality, and therefore, to use again the metaphor already employed, liable to be coloured by the glass through which it passes? That the writers of the New Testament were real men can scarcely be

gainsaid. The literary style of Paul is different from that of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, while that of Mark is different from that of the Fourth Gospel. The individuality of the various writers comes out again and again in the narratives of the Gospels, in the selection of the incidents recorded, and in little touches that are included in the narration, or omitted from it. The Word of God is manifestly mediated through the mind and personality of the writers as truly as in the case of the Old Testament. We must therefore again be prepared to find inaccuracies, and reflections of the ideas and expectations of the fallible authors.

That the case is in important respects different from that of the Old Testament is, however, not surprising. The whole of the New Testament was written within a short space of time compared with the Old Testament, and proceeded from a small group of people who were governed by a common point of view on the major matters on which they wrote. In the Synoptic Gospels we have three works dealing with a common subject, but they were not governed by fundamentally different attitudes to that subject as were, say, the different accounts of the founding of the monarchy in the Old Testament. Hence the differences that abound in their narrations of the same events and utterances of Jesus have not the significance of the differences already noted in the Old Testament. They are mostly too trivial to be styled contradictions or inaccuracies, though they are sufficient to show that they are the fruit of human minds, and that inspiration is here fundamentally the same as in the Old Testament.

There are, however, some differences between the Synoptic Gospels and the Fourth Gospel, which seem to reflect a definite difference of viewpoint on matters where both can hardly be correct. Thus, according to the first three Gospels our Lord's Last Supper with His disciples

was a Passover meal. In Mark xiv. 12 we read that on the morning of the day on which the Passover was sacrificed, the disciples asked Jesus where He would have them prepare the Passover, and the following verses record that in accordance with His instructions "they made ready the Passover". With this Matt. xxvi. 18 ff. and Luke xxii. 7 ff. are in full agreement. On the other hand, the Fourth Gospel represents the Last Supper as something other than a Passover meal. Thus John xviii. 28 says that during the night that followed the Last Supper, the accusers of Jesus would not themselves enter the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, and so be unable to eat the Passover. To this author, therefore, the Passover was not yet slain, and the death of Jesus on the Cross synchronized with the killing of the Passover sacrifice. He accordingly records no suggestion that Jesus thought of the Last Supper as a Passover meal. Similarly, the Fourth Gospel differs from the others in representing the cleansing of the Temple as having taken place at the beginning of our Lord's ministry (John ii. 14 ff.), instead of at the end (Mark xi. 15 ff. and parallels). These differences from the Synoptic Gospels would seem to be deliberate.

It has been said above that the Old Testament was not written to be a text-book of history or of science, but that its fundamental purpose was to record spiritual experience and spiritual teaching. Similarly the Gospels were not written as scientific biographies, but to serve a religious community. Need we therefore be any more troubled by such differences as are found in the Gospels than by the more considerable differences to which attention has been drawn in the Old Testament? To this it may be answered that it has been argued that Christ is the standard by which the spiritual teaching of the Old Testament is to be judged. Yet where shall we find Christ, if the Gospels are not absolutely to be

relied on? The differences between His utterances as recorded in the different Gospels are not seldom pressed to lead to the conclusion that there are few words of His of which we can be sure, and Jesus Himself is represented as wholly screened from us by the Evangelists. This would seem to dissolve in the mists of uncertainty Him Who has been held to be the touchstone of inspiration. Such a view seems to be entirely without justification.

As biographies the Gospels are very meagre records. They record incidents ascribed to a pitifully few of the days of His life. Yet it can hardly be supposed that on all the other days of His life He neither did nor said anything that was worth recording. Nevertheless by the reading of the Gospels we feel we know Him far better than we know many another from the reading of a ponderous biography. As a record of the words and deeds of Jesus, they are at best but fragmentary; as a revelation of Him they are complete, and from their study we may know Him and know His spirit with assurance.

If four or five competent artists were to paint portraits of a single man, there would inevitably be innumerable differences of detail in their work. There would be minute differences in the shape or proportion of this feature or of that, of colouring in hair and complexion. But their study would not lead to a complete scepticism as to what the person painted really looked like. On the contrary, the study of them all would yield a very much better idea of the appearance of the subject of the paintings than any one of them alone could. Similarly, the examination of four or five newspapers published in a single city on a single day will often reveal great differences in the picture of the previous day's events. There will be considerable variety of details, and not seldom disagreement at not a few points. Yet no sane man concludes that contemporary happenings are

unknowable, and that only a complete scepticism is justified. He rather concludes that by the study of a number of newspapers he can gain a fuller and truer picture of events than by the study of any one alone.

Even so it is with the study of the Gospels. Each gives us, not so much a series of incidents from the life of Jesus as a portrait of Him and a revelation of His spirit. We may know Him from any one of them; but we may know Him much better from them all. It is He Who is the effulgence of the divine glory, and not His words and deeds alone, and behind and through the record of His words and deeds, however incomplete, we may find Him.

Nevertheless, it is true that He Who is in Himself the perfect revelation of God to men is Himself mediated to us in some measure by men, and therefore imperfectly. The Gospels contain the things that men remembered about Him when He was no longer with them in the flesh, and human memory is rarely infallibly accurate in its details. The Epistles of Paul were occasional letters, arising sometimes out of the circumstances of the moment, but enabling the Apostle to express truths and principles that far transcended the occasion that called them forth, and that embodied his understanding of the significance of Christ. Not seldom Paul is contrasted with Christ, and his teaching represented as something quite alien to the teaching of Christ. Just as in the case of Old Testament writers, so here some would regard his writings as expressing merely his own reflections and opinions, while others would regard them as authoritative words of God, which must be accepted without question as final for all Christians. The truth would seem to be that Paul was charged with a divinely given message, but that for the form in which it was delivered he was himself responsible. He was the ambassador, not the postman. Similarly, too, with the other New Testament writers.

A single illustration will here suffice. Most of the New Testament writers looked for a catastrophic end of the existing world order, and the establishment of a new world order to be ushered in by the physical return of Christ to the earth. And there are not a few passages where this is promised for the near future. "Now it is high time for you to wake out of sleep," said Paul, "for . . . the night is far spent, and the day is at hand" (Rom. xiii. 11 f.). Again, "The Lord is at hand" (Phil. iv. 5). Similarly James says "the coming of the Lord is at hand" (v. 8), and the First Epistle of Peter "the end of all things is at hand" (iv. 7), while in the Apocalypse we find "Behold, I come quickly" (xxii. 7). As the years passed by, however, and these expectations were not realized, doubts began to arise, and the Second Epistle of Peter endeavoured to set them at rest by the suggestion that time does not count with God, and that a single day with Him is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day (iii. 8). But this still left unexplained the clear failure of the Pauline hope of the Parousia within his own lifetime (1 Cor. xv. 51 f., 1 Thess. iv. 15). For the New Testament no more than for the Old, therefore, can inspiration be supposed to yield us verbal infallibility.

Large questions still remain to be asked, however. For why, it may be said, should any further writings be necessary after the Gospels? If Christ is the climax of divine revelation, the standard by which the truth of the spiritual essence of all the Old Testament revelation is to be tested, should not the Gospels, which have been declared above to yield a real knowledge of Him and of His spirit, have formed the close of the Scripture record? If the Old Testament is the record of man's progressive experience of God and response to God, surely, it might seem, it would have been fittingly terminated by the story of Him Whose experience of

God was perfect, and Whose response to God was matched in its perfection only by His experience. If revelation here reached its goal, should not revelation here have ceased?

To ask the question is to misunderstand the whole message of the New Testament. Its message throughout, and not merely in the Gospels, is Christ. The Gospels show Him to us in the flesh amongst men, but they all end by declaring that He Who died was alive. The rest of the New Testament presents Him still alive and active amongst men, though no longer visible in the flesh, and the picture of Christ without these other books would be quite incomplete. Moreover, in the Gospels we see how He impressed those amongst whom He walked in Palestine; but in the rest of the New Testament we see how He continued to impress those who knew Him not after the flesh. That is of the first importance to men of all succeeding generations and of all countries, who are denied such knowledge of Him as was given to those first contemporaries, but who may still, like Paul, find Him their contemporary in every age. It is not, as is sometimes supposed, that in the Gospels we see Him as He was, and in the Epistles we see Him as men afterwards interpreted Him. In the Gospels we see Him ultimately through the eyes of those who companied with Him in the flesh; in the Epistles too we see Him through the eyes of those who companied with Him, though in the spirit alone. Their companying with Him was no less real, and Paul could describe the intimacy of his fellowship in the words "I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). His message was received in the intimacy of that fellowship, and was fundamentally the unfolding of the significance of his experience.

The final revelation is not the New Testament, therefore, but the Christ Who is the theme of the New

Testament. By Him the truth of the Old Testament is tested, and He gives the measure of its inspiration; by Him, too, the New Testament is to be estimated, and the men through whom we know Him are to be judged. When they treat of trivial things—as even Paul could—and not the essentially spiritual things in which our Lord was interested, they speak with but human authority. Thus, when Paul lays down the principle that women must keep silence in Church (1 Cor. xiv. 34), or that women must not pray unless they have the head covered (1 Cor. xi. 4 ff.), he may have been giving sound counsel to the Corinthian Church in view of local conditions, but he was hardly enunciating any universal spiritual principle binding on all men as a divine command. The Gospel records that Anna the prophetess "gave thanks to God, and spake of him (i.e. Jesus) to all them that were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem" within the sacred precincts of the Temple (Luke ii. 38), and Paul himself was surely more completely inspired and enunciating a principle of more enduring validity when he said "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28).

The recognition of the inspiration of the Scripture does not involve, then, the elevation of its letter to be a final and unchallengeable authority for men. The Reformers challenged the Catholic view of the authority of the Church, and exaggerated the authority of the Bible to such a degree that for many it became the sole and supreme authority. Yet if the Church is the body of Christ (1 Cor. xii. 27), capable of being guided into all the truth by the Spirit of truth (John xvi. 13), it, too, should be the vehicle of inspiration, and vested with an authority beside the authority of the Bible. Neither however, can be the ultimate authority for Christians.

For the authority of both the Scriptures and the Church goes back to the authority of Christ. Neither Bible nor Church can take His place, though both may lead us to Him. For God is a Spirit, and through Spirit He speaks His final Word to us. Our desire for something lower than spirit, something more tangible and certain as we imagine, does not honour Christ, in Whom, and not alone through Whom, is God to be seen.

CHAPTER III

THE PROPHETS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

PEOPLE who style themselves "students of prophecy" are usually persuaded that prophecy is thoroughly relevant to our modern world. They regard prophecy not as the enunciation of enduring spiritual principles, but as an enigmatic presentation of the things that are happening in our own day, and that may be expected to happen to-morrow. They are skilled in finding in the prophets cryptic references to the things that have just happened, regardless of the fact that the same verse have been taken with equal confidence by their predecessors in other ages to refer to events that happened in their day. When they venture into the future they are invariably falsified by the event. They believe that the divine origin of the prophecies is proved by the exactness of the accord with the events which they themselves read into them, regardless of the fact that so inexact is the accord that quite other events have been read into them in other ages, and even by contemporary rival schools of prophetic interpretation adopting the same fundamental principles. If some specimen of pre-historic art were hailed as providing an exact likeness of Oliver Cromwell, and equally an exact likeness of Napoleon, and again an exact likeness of Mussolini, we should doubt the exactness of the likeness to any. And any student of the history of interpretation of prophecy along these lines is likely to doubt the exactness of the accord that is so triumphantly announced by all. He will also observe that in so far as accord is

alleged, it is, as it must in the nature of the case be, only after the event that it can be discovered. On this view, prophecy is not the unfolding of the nature and will of God. It is not even the unfolding of history. It is rather the concealing of history, and it demonstrates, not the divine ability to reveal the distant future, but complete inability to reveal it identifiably. In such study there is nothing that honours God, and nothing that is truly spiritual.

There is a study of the prophets, however, which involves a truer recognition of their uniqueness and their spirit, and which is relevant to our own generation in bringing out of prophecy a spiritual word of God to our hearts. Too often those who have reacted against the misinterpretation of prophecy above referred to, have preferred either to ignore the prophets, save for a very few passages, or to read them in a detached way as historical documents revealing to us the social and religious conditions in ancient Israel and the ideas of these prophetic thinkers as to their reform. This is almost as grossly to mistake their significance, and pitifully to miss the rich treasures the prophetic books contain.

It is not to be denied that the prophetic books are not easy to understand. They consist so largely of brief oracles, put together on no very clear principles of arrangement, with sudden transitions from one oracle to another, and usually with but the scantiest of evidence of the situation that gave them birth. Clearly it is impossible here to attempt anything like a general interpretation of prophecy. It is desired rather to indicate the nature of prophecy, and its meaning for us. To do this it is necessary briefly to review its origins and development, not as a historical study for its own sake, but to see what were the broad principles that underlay it. For it is only as we study prophecy in

a historical perspective that we can perceive its true genius.

The origins of prophecy are exceedingly obscure, but certainly very humble. Recent study has emphasized the ecstatic element it contained—an element not only found in its origins, but persisting in no small measure in its development. Under the power of the divine afflatus, when the spirit of God rushed upon him, the prophet would do the most extraordinary of things. Indeed, prophecy and madness were indistinguishable, and while superstitious awe protected the prophet, he was at the same time held in general contempt. We have the interesting narrative that tells how on one occasion Saul was infected by the frenzied ardour of a group of prophets to such an extent that he stripped himself, and rolled on the ground naked all night, and that *therefore* men said "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (1 Sam. xix. 24). When David moved the Ark into Jerusalem, he leaped and danced before it, exposing his person. He earned the contempt of his wife for thus acting as a prophet—as "one of the vain fellows", she puts it (2 Sam. vi. 20). When Elisha sent one of his disciples to anoint Jehu, and to summon him to seize the throne, Jehu's companions asked him what "this mad fellow" came for (2 Kings ix. 11).

So closely, indeed, were prophecy and madness akin, that when Saul's fits of madness came upon him, and he acted so irresponsibly that he hurled javelins about at anyone who happened to be within sight, we are told that this strange behaviour was "prophesying". "And it came to pass on the morrow, that an evil spirit from God came mightily upon Saul, and he *prophesied* in the midst of the house: . . . and Saul had his spear in his hand. And Saul cast the spear, for he said, I will smite David even to the wall" (1 Sam. xviii. 10 f.). A prophecy whose point could not be mistaken! So, too, when

David fled from Saul's presence to the king of Gath, and found his life in danger, he saved himself by feigning madness. He "scrabbled on the doors of the gate, and let his spittle fall down on his beard" (1 Sam. xxi. 13). The point was that madness and prophetic ecstasy were so indistinguishable that no one would dare to injure him, lest perchance he were acting under divine influence.

That an element of eccentricity continued even in the greater prophets needs little reminder. When Isaiah wished to represent to the people their folly in trusting in Egypt, he gave vigour to his warning by walking the streets of Jerusalem naked and barefoot (Isa. xx. 2). He thus declared that the Egyptians should be powerless to protect even themselves, but should be carried to adorn the triumphal procession of the Assyrian monarch, naked and barefoot—as we know from surviving examples of Assyrian art captives were accustomed to be humiliated. Similarly Jeremiah, perhaps the greatest of the prophets, gave point to his warning that it was useless to fight against Babylon by symbolically wearing a wooden yoke upon his neck (Jer. xxvii. 2), just as Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had earlier made himself iron horns to symbolize his prediction (1 Kings xxii. 11). Ezekiel frequently performed symbolic actions of more elaborate eccentricity.

Nor was such prophecy confined to Israel. In the time of Ahab we find prophets of the Tyrian Baal among the Israelites, who danced about in their frenzy and gashed themselves with knives. Though they seem to have been themselves Israelites, they suffice to show that prophecy was not an unknown feature of the religious life of the neighbouring peoples. And this we learn from independent sources. To name but one, the Egyptian story of Wen-Amon presents its testimony to the early practice of prophecy in Syria. In Asia Minor, too, the phenomenon

is found, and there Hölscher would locate its origin—a suggestion developed by T. H. Robinson in his conjecture that prophecy arose amongst the Hittites, since theirs is the only influence which ever controlled Asia Minor and Syria, and practically nothing else.

Eccentricity was not the only element of prophecy, however. Nor was it ever eccentricity for its own sake, but always directed to some definite end. Primarily, of course, the prophet was an enthusiast for the god whose inspiration he received. The prophets of the Tyrian Baal in Elijah's day worked themselves into a frenzy in Baal's interest, while the prophets of Israel a few years later expressed their passionate zeal for their God by inciting Jehu to seize the throne, and by assisting him to carry through his most bloody revolution.

A further outstanding feature of the early prophets was their intense patriotism. They were passionate lovers of their country, and hated every foreign oppressor with all their soul. They came forward to use all the power of religion to kindle the spirit of their fellows to rise and smite the oppressor. Thus Deborah, a prophetess, stirred Barak to take the lead and rouse Israel to freedom, and herself accompanied him to kindle in the hearts of his followers the fierce flame of passion. With burning words of hatred she hailed the overthrow of the oppressor, and gloated over the bitter pain the proud mother of Sisera experienced when her son returned not home (Judges v. 28 ff.).

In the time of Saul it was the Philistines who were the oppressors, and the prophets were therefore bitterly anti-Philistine. When Samuel parted from Saul, after their first meeting, he told him he should meet a company of prophets "after thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison—or, as some would render, the monument—of the Philistines" (1 Sam. x. 5). It is not

without significance that it was in that spot that Saul met the prophets, and caught their frenzy.

In the time of Ahab and his immediate successors, it was the Aramaeans of Damascus who were the oppressors. Again and again they attacked the Israelites, and annexed large districts of northern Israel and the territory across the Jordan, treating the people with a cruelty that was still a vivid memory in the time of Amos, in the middle of the following century. Hence the prophets were ever ready to rouse the spirits of Israel against these northern foes. An unnamed prophet encouraged Ahab to resist Benhadad, and when the Aramaean came again to attack Israel in the vain confidence that a battle in the plains would be more successful than an attack on the hill fortress of Samaria, another prophet came forth to assure the king of victory. When Ahab and Jehoshaphat went up to the fatal field of Ramoth-gilead, no less than four hundred prophets were found to offer them false assurance of victory, and it is made clear that they prophesied, not in the name of Baal, but in the name of the God of Israel. In the days of Jehoram, when the Aramaeans besieged Samaria, and the king was reduced to the point of surrender, it was Elisha who still maintained the morale of the suffering populace. Although, therefore, in this age, Elijah and Elisha were in violent conflict with the cult of the Tyrian Baal, which was then flourishing in Israel, when it came to a question of war with foreign foes, the prophets of Jehovah, including Elisha, were ready to throw their weight into the national scale.

But if Hebrew prophecy had been nothing more than this, it would not have deserved our attention to-day. Happily it was more. For no movement should be judged by its Whence? but by its Whither? And if Hebrew prophecy had beginnings of little promise, it achieved heights of the rarest value to the spiritual progress of

mankind. Nor are even the origins of Hebrew prophecy exhausted in this element of frenzied piety and patriotism. The waters of more than one stream flowed into the river of Hebrew prophecy.

There is an important note in 1 Sam. ix. 9 that "he that is now called a prophet (*nabi'*) was beforetime called a seer (*ro'eh*)". The meaning of this verse is not very clear, but it seems to point to the merging of two originally distinct classes, and it is of no little significance that this note appears in the record about Samuel. For while Samuel was, in the earliest narrative, a Seer, we find in him some of the outstanding marks of the *nabi'*, and it was doubtless under the influence of his powerful personality and example that the two classes drew together and became known by a common name.

In that early narrative we find Samuel at Ramah, a man of some importance in the town, but with a purely local reputation. When Saul is unable to find his father's asses, it occurs to his servant that Samuel might be able to give some information. The only difficulty is the fee, which he would naturally expect, but which Saul is unable at the moment to provide. Fortunately the servant has sixpence, which is sufficient for the purpose. Speculation has been indulged in as to the method by which the Seer gained such knowledge, and he has been likened, improbably I think, to Babylonian and other magicians. That certain magical ideas are to be found amongst the prophets may, indeed, be fairly inferred from such a narrative as the account of Elisha's death, where the prophet places his hands on the king's hands and shoots from his bow, and then makes the king strike the ground with his arrows—where potency is held to lie in the act itself. But that has no relevance to the character of the Seer, or the method of his enlightenment. Neither the story of Samuel nor that of Ahijah of Shiloh

to whom the wife of Jeroboam came to inquire if her son should recover, gives us any light on that method. But however he gained his knowledge, the Seer was a man whose vision could penetrate beyond the confines of ordinary human perception, and he brought into the stream of prophecy a contribution that was of the profoundest importance.

The early *nabi'*, or ecstatic prophet, is commonly met with in groups, where group psychology would operate to help to generate the frenzy, and frequently we read of companies of prophets. The *ro'eh* was apparently an individual figure, who was available for consultation on private and personal matters, and though a common term, *nabi'*, is generally used after the time of Samuel, the two types seem to have continued. The individual prophet was frequently attached to a sanctuary, where he stood alongside the priest as a member of the personnel of the shrine. The larger sanctuaries may have had more than one of these persons, who were available for consultation. The priest was the repository of tradition and usage; the ministry of the prophet was of a different kind. To the priest were entrusted certain legal functions, and if anyone wished to sacrifice he alone knew the precise technique the case required. In cases of sickness or need, if one went to the shrine to recite prayers or incantations, he would be the person to know the appropriate ones. He was also the guardian of the sacred oracle—the ephod, or *urim* and *thummim*—which was consulted by mechanical means. But for private inquiries as to where lost asses were, or whether a sick child would recover, it was more usual to resort to the prophet of the shrine. It is possible that the prophet received his message through some form of trance, and there are some who hold that all the prophets of the Old Testament received their message in this way. There is no certain evidence on this point, but in any case

it is probable that the prophet received his message through the organ of his personality. It took form in his mind. This would seem to be characteristic of the prophet of this type, whether attached to a sanctuary or not. For many individual prophets in Israel were clearly not attached to shrines, and many did not wait to be consulted by those who wanted guidance, but were as active and full of initiative as those early groups of prophets who kindled ardour for the nation and its God. What is of importance to remember is that there were several varieties of prophet in Israel, and that from the time of Samuel the lines between them cannot be hardly drawn. And Samuel stands almost at the beginning of the Old Testament account of the prophets. If the early ecstatic *nabi'* brought in the element of ardour in faith and patriotism, the *ro'eh* brought in the element of illumination.

Yet another element entered into it, of even more significance. From the beginning there was in Hebrew prophecy a moral element, which gave it its unique character. It is not equally conspicuous in all the prophets of the Old Testament, indeed, but it was those prophets who most manifested this element who were most truly and most essentially Hebrew prophets.

There are passages in which Moses is referred to as a prophet. In one sense, of course, it is not true, but in another it is most profoundly true. Moses was not an ecstatic zealot, or a man to be consulted about lost property, but a great leader, who took a company of serfs and made of them a nation. More than that, it was Moses who gave Israel that rich moral element which was the distinctive thing about their religion, and who thus contributed to the stream of prophecy its most distinctive feature. I am not thinking merely of the Decalogue, though I find no reason to deny that the Ethical Decalogue of Exod. xx came to Israel through

Moses. But I am here thinking of something more primary.

In Exod. vi. 2 f. we read: "And God spake unto Moses and said, I am Jehovah, and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as El Shaddai, but by my name Jehovah I was not known unto them." Moses came to the people in Egypt, then, with a new divine name. It is commonly supposed that Jehovah was originally the God of the Kenite clan, with which Moses had taken refuge. But whether so or not, one day there burned in Moses' heart the certainty that Jehovah would through him deliver his people from their Egyptian bondage. And he went down to Egypt and told them that this God, Whose very name was new and strange to them, had chosen them to be His people, and would deliver them from their bondage. In His name Moses led the people out of Egypt to Horeb, the sacred mount where Jehovah's chief seat was. And here the people entered into a solemn covenant with Jehovah. In all this there was something new and unique in the history of religion. Jehovah had first adopted and delivered Israel, and now in her gratitude Israel adopted Jehovah as the national God. The worship of Jehovah in Israel began, then, as an act of moral choice, and had its roots in the essentially ethical emotion of gratitude. It is true that Israel passed through a long period when every man did that which was right in his own eyes. But Moses had planted in the covenant relation an ethical seed, which was destined to bear rich fruit, and which bore its noblest fruit in the work of the great prophets.

I have said that the ethical note was not struck by every prophet. Nevertheless, it was very frequently struck, even in early days. Of what great significance was Nathan's rebuke of David for his adultery, and for his infamous treatment of a most faithful servant. The

courage of the man who dared to challenge his monarch with "Thou art the man" (2 Sam. xii. 7) was a good augury for the future of prophecy. Even more courageous was Elijah's rebuke of Ahab for the way he secured possession of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings xxi. 17 ff.). The covenant that was ethically grounded in gratitude was already bearing ethical fruit, and bringing into Hebrew prophecy its unique note.

So far I have not mentioned prediction as a feature of prophecy. An older generation, obsessed with the Greek derivation of the word, found in prediction the principal element of prophecy. More recent writers, finding no suggestion of prediction in the derivation of the Hebrew *nabi'*, have insisted that a prophet was not a fore-teller, but a forth-teller.

There is an instructive verse in Exod. vii. 1, where the word *nabi'* occurs. Here we read: "And the Lord said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet (*nabi'*)." With this may be compared the parallel passage in Exod. iv. 15 f., which reads: "Thou shalt speak unto him (i.e. Aaron), and put the words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall say. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people: and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God." Here the word *nabi'* is not used, but the same prophetic relationship would seem to be in mind, and the passages show that the prophet was regarded as the mouthpiece of God. And whenever Hebrew prophecy was true to its genius, it was the mouthpiece of God. The prophet spoke God's message to the men of his own day and generation. Its significant content was not the distant future, but the principles that God would have them live by. Sometimes the prophet penetrated deeply into the heart of God, and brought out some new truth

concerning God Himself. Sometimes he addressed himself to the evils of his day and generation, and summoned men in the name of God to sweep away all unrighteousness and injustice from their midst.

But with all this there *is* a predictive element, which is not to be ignored. Look where you will in the prophets and you will find prediction. For prediction was a very real function of the prophets. It may not appear in the derivation of *nabi'*, but etymology is a very incomplete guide to the meaning of words. For words have a history, as well as a source. No one would think of determining the connotation of the word *priest* solely by its derivation from the Greek *presbuteros*, or *elder*, and as little can the connotation of *nabi'* be found solely in its source, for we have already seen that the Seer was merged in the *nabi'*. That prediction was regarded as a vital element of the word of the prophet may be seen at once from a passage in Deuteronomy, where it is laid down that the criterion by which a true prophet may be distinguished from a false prophet is the success or failure of his prediction. "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. xviii. 22).

Fundamentally, the prophet was the man of clear vision, who looked on the events and social conditions of his own day with more penetrating eye than his fellows. When Elisha was at Dothan, the Syrians sent to capture him. The prophet's servant was alarmed to find the city surrounded, but Elisha was calm and confident, and quietly said: "They that be for us are more than they that be with them". He then prayed: "Lord, open thou his eyes, that he may see.' And he saw the mountain full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha (2 Kings vi. 15 ff.). That is but a typical picture.

The prophet was the man of the open eye. He looked on any given situation and he saw it all. He saw through it to the end. He read the inevitable issue of things, and proclaimed it with no uncertain voice. When he saw his fellows plunging headlong in a course of sin and selfishness, he saw the inevitable disasters to which that course must lead. When others lived in the comforts of the present, he declared the sorrows that were being laid up. He *did* predict, but whether the events he predicted were in the near or distant future, they were related to the conditions of his own day and generation. It was never prediction for its own sake, or to impress succeeding generations with his inspired cleverness, but ever with an immediate and practical objective—to persuade men to turn from their follies to God, in the hope that they might avert the evils he saw coming. That is the genius of Hebrew prophecy. The prophet looked through the present to the end towards which it was tending. He was essentially a Seer, a man who penetrated human affairs and human situations, and who laid bare their inevitable issue.

But all the prophets were not equally penetrating in their vision, and there was real progress from age to age. For there is a human element as well as a divine element in prophecy. Its richness depends not alone on God's willingness to give, but on the prophet's capacity to receive. Thus, when Jehu had carried through his orgy of bloodshed, we read that God praised him for it. He had acted under prophetic incitement in his murderous zeal, and the zealot Rechabites had assisted him in his massacre. And then we read: "The Lord said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in mine heart, thy sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel" (2 Kings x. 30). But a century later, when

Hosea's first child was born, we read that "the Lord said unto him, Call his name Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu" (Hos. i. 4). Clearly, in Hosea's view, Jehu's assassinations and massacres, so far from being according to all that was in God's heart, were strongly displeasing to Him, since they were now to be punished. This does not mean that God had advanced somewhat and no longer took delight in acts that He had been rewarding for a century. But it does mean that His prophets had advanced, and now saw more clearly into His heart.

So was it with patriotism. We have said that patriotism was one of the distinctive marks of the early *nabi'*. It continued so throughout. But there was a considerable advance in the understanding of the true nature of patriotism, and it was in this connexion that the distinction between true and false prophets first appeared. The earlier prophets were ever ready to kindle the war-like zeal of their contemporaries against their enemies. In later times there were still prophets who did the same, but they are known as the false prophets, while the true prophets opposed these things. The false prophets doubtless thought they were the true successors of Samuel and Elijah and Elisha, for just as they had stirred up men to fight against the Philistines and Aramaeans, so were the false prophets ready to support every war against foreign oppressors, whether Aramaean, Assyrian or Babylonian. But just as Samuel and Elijah and Elisha had penetrated to the needs of their own day, so the true prophets were their real successors in penetrating to the differing needs of their own, and in perceiving that a crude conservatism was insufficient to meet the changing demands of a new age. They realized that patriotism does not consist merely in hating the foreigner, and desiring to see one's own country powerful

and wealthy. They recognized that what mattered was not the wealth and power of the state, but its spiritual and moral worth. They believed that the power of God was great enough to rescue Israel from the hand of all their oppressors, if only Israel would cultivate in her life those qualities which were dearest to the heart of God Himself. This was an altogether deeper patriotism—the desire to see their country not so much great as good, and the conviction that unless it were good, it could not become truly great.

False prophets and true prophets alike prophesied in the name of God and felt themselves to be His servants. But whereas the false prophets were ever concerned to prophesy smooth things, the things that men wanted to hear, the others were often constrained to say things that were highly unpopular. The false prophets reserved all their condemnation for the foreign foes of Israel, while the true prophets, though displaying no gentleness to the cruelties and wickednesses of foreign peoples, were more especially interested in attacking the things that marred the life of their own people. The false prophets were ever ready to go with the stream, while the true prophets again and again stood against it. It was not that they loved opposition. Far from it! The loneliness of their position oft-times rent their heart. But they felt an inner constraint they could not resist. They were prophets because they had to be, because the hand of the Lord was laid upon them. "The lion hath roared, who will not fear? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy?" (Amos iii. 8). "When I say, I will speak no more in His name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am worn out with the strain and unable to control it" (Jer. xx. 9).

The distinction between true and false prophets first appears with Micaiah (1 Kings xxii). When Ahab and

Jehoshaphat were thinking of going up to re-capture Ramoth-gilead, no less than four hundred prophets of Jehovah encouraged them to their adventure. It was in the name, not of Baal, but of Jehovah that they spoke, promising the two kings victory. Then Micaiah was brought in, in answer to Jehoshaphat's request. He already had the reputation of being somewhat of a pessimist, who always prophesied evil, and who was always found on the unpopular side. And he lived up to his reputation. Micaiah, true forerunner of a great host, found a prison as the reward of his faithfulness. That his word was justified by the event mattered little. That was, doubtless, only an aggravation of his offence. Whoso would be honoured of men, let him not be a prophet of God—unless it be a false one!

Throughout large parts of the Old Testament we find the comfortable doctrine that happiness and prosperity are the inevitable reward of faithfulness to God. That God is kind to them that love and serve Him is indeed true, but that His kindness shows itself in material comforts and worldly honours is belied by the whole course of prophetic history. Which of the prophets received aught but the scorn and contempt of men? Which of them found aught but persecution and suffering, and the agony of a loneliness that was far more bitter than the pain of the blows laid upon them, or the sufferings of a prison? Yet pity not the prophets in their sufferings. Envy them rather the faithfulness on which God could so count.

But we must turn to another side of prophetic progress. The earlier prophets not merely took a deep interest in public and national affairs. They took a decisive hand in them as well. It was due to Samuel that Saul was set on the throne, and when Samuel had broken with Saul, the prophet looked out David to succeed him on the throne. When David was about to die, his eldest

surviving son, Adonijah, somewhat naturally thought he would have the succession to the throne. It was the prophet Nathan who frustrated his ambition, and set Solomon on the throne. When Solomon's oppressive rule and heavy exactions had alienated men's hearts from him, the prophet Ahijah stirred up Jeroboam to head a rebellion and seize the throne. For the moment it failed, and Jeroboam was forced to flee to Egypt. But when the strong hand of Solomon was removed, the revolution was accomplished, and Israel was divided into two separate states. When Rehoboam purposed to march northwards to the conquest of the northern tribes, it was another prophet, Shemaiah, who paralysed his action by forbidding him in the name of the Lord. Elisha sent one of his disciples to summon Jehu to rebel against his master and seize the throne.

The earlier prophets were thus constantly engaging in plots, and interfering with the course of government. The later prophets, however, were men of a different stamp. They still took a deep and vital interest in public affairs, and were ever discussing national policies and advocating public action. But they relied on the power of their word alone. They did not supplement it with plots and incitements to revolution and murder. They strove to influence the court, either directly or through the medium of public opinion. But they did not plot against the throne. For they did not feel it to be necessary to do so. So strongly convinced were they that national sin must entail its own penalties that they felt it was superfluous to do more. A false national policy could only lead to an ill end, and involve the nation in deeper misfortunes than any the prophet could desire.

But while every prophet was primarily the mouthpiece of God to his own generation, and related his message to the affairs of his own day, there was always a timeless element in the message of the great prophets.

They were not mere political and social reformers, but men who penetrated some of the secrets of God's heart, and laid them bare for all succeeding generations. They did not see the whole of God's heart, indeed, and none of them had a perfect view of Him. But each of them enshrined some fresh understanding of God in a new emphasis in divine truth. And what is equally vital is that the distinctive message of each prophet is always based on his own experience, and is always intimately related to his view of God.

The greatest example, of course, is Hosea. The prophet learned from his own tragic experience the depth of God's love. Though his own wife was unfaithful to him, and utterly unworthy of the love he gave her, yet did he love her still. And from the agony of his personal experience he learned to know what the love of God was like. If human love could thus survive the bitter wounds that faithlessness inflicted, how much more must the love of God, who chose Israel in her weakness and bondage and made her His bride, survive the cruel faithlessness of Israel? Though Israel was perverse and worthless, yet would He continue to love her until He won her. For His love was unconquerable. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? Mine heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together. I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God and not man" (Hos. xi. 8 f.).

But the love of God is not mere weak sentimentality, as Jeremiah later saw, and as Amos had earlier perceived. It was the sterner side of God that Amos saw. His soul was aflame at the injustice he saw rampant on every side in the northern kingdom, the luxury of the upper classes and the relentless oppression of the poor, and he cried aloud against it. If God was God, He must be a God of righteousness. And Amos propounds

the great and eternal principle that a great heritage brings a great responsibility. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities" (Amos iii. 2). Of what profound significance is that word to us, who rejoice in the greatness of the heritage that is ours. Begone the spirit of an empty pride! Rather let our hearts tremble even as they rejoice, and realize the weight of our responsibility.

In the work of such men the ethical seed that Moses had planted produced its noble and rich fruit. For while they unfolded, with ever growing clearness, the character of God, they were not concerned with an abstract theology. Back of all their distinctive emphases were two great principles, common to them all, principles which are still valid for us. They are (1) that whatever God is, we must be like Him. If He is righteous, we must be righteous. If He is holy, we must be holy too. If He is gracious, then must we be gracious. If we truly reverence a God of this character, then must we build up in our lives those rich ethical qualities which belong to the essence of His heart. And (2) unless we do thus strive to be like Him, we do not truly worship Him. All our outward forms of worship are an offence to Him, unless behind them is the truer and deeper worship of obedience. And that deeper worship is not to be found in the ritual of the cultus. Again and again the prophets denounce the cultus of their day. "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Yea, though ye offer me your burnt offerings and your meal offerings, I will not accept them" (Amos v. 21 f.). "For I desire mercy and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hos. vi. 6). "Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, and

the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. vi. 7 f.).

It is sometimes maintained that the prophets opposed the ritual in itself, and demanded its complete abolition, and to this view I formerly subscribed. Certain it is that they realized that no mere *opus operatum* could achieve anything, and that in itself it was not infrequently a peril. But I think the alternative view is more probable, and that, with the possible exception of Jeremiah, they would not have denied that the ritual had value, but only when it was the organ of the worship of the life, and not when it was the substitute for that worship. When God was outwardly honoured with a stately ritual by men who rejected from their hearts all those high qualities which inhere in God Himself, their ritual was an offence to Him and a fundamental dishonour of His name, since it was merely a hollow pretence of honour. Certainly the exclusive demand of the prophets is for obedience to the will of God, and the culminating word of prophecy is Jeremiah's promise of God's rich and immediate fellowship, whereby that will shall be known in all its fullness. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord. For they shall all know me" (Jer. xxxi. 33 f.).

It will, I think, be perceived that in all this great and enduring principles are to be found, principles that far transcend the occasions that called them forth, and that are as relevant to our modern world as they were to the world of Israel. To-day as then men are called to a profoundly spiritual worship of God that expresses itself in every relationship of life. To-day as then all that is

an offence to God in our life, whether as individuals or as nations, is a curse to ourselves. This does not mean that true religion consists in social reform, in the amelioration of the conditions of life, in the pursuit of economic comfort, peace and prosperity. It means that religion must be the spring of all true social service, and that its inspiration must be the vision of the heart of God and the realization that man is a child of God. Its purpose must be not to lift man to ease and comfort, but to lift him to God, and unless it does lift him to God it will merely defeat itself. We have heard much denunciation of the false gods of race and blood in our day. But comfort is a more widely worshipped, though less crudely vicious, false god. And in the years preceding the war the peoples of many lands worshipped the idol of peace. For when men desire peace but not the things that make for peace, peace but not the righteousness which is its only basis, peace but not the will of God in which alone is peace, they merely worship an idol. The prophets of Israel speak to our day, and minister to our need, when they teach that only disaster can come upon men when they do not build their life on the will of God.

Chu Hsi, the twelfth-century Chinese interpreter of Confucianism, whose profound influence on the orthodox schools of interpretation has lasted from his day to ours, tells us: "When in my teens I was overjoyed to read in Mencius that the sages were of the same flesh and blood as ourselves, for, thought I, if that be the case, then I, too, can be a sage. Now, however, I find it is hard".[1] Our study of the Hebrew prophets reveals to us that they, too, were men of the same flesh and blood as ourselves, and encourages in us the thought that in our day men may be as they. Every generation needs the prophet, the man who can expound God's message in terms of

[1] Quoted in J. P. Bruce, *Chu Hsi and His Masters*, p. 60.

its life and necessities. It is not alone the ability to understand and to expound the prophets of Israel that we need, but the mantle of their spirit to bring the creative Word of God to our age. The wild frenzy of the early *nabi'* may be dispensed with, but at least there must be an absorbing passion in the service of God. Nor is a true and enlightened patriotism, through which we may best serve the wider international causes that claim our service, to be despised. Beyond a living interest in the affairs of our day, we need penetrating vision—the power to look through the present to the end to which it is tending. We need willingness to be lonely and misunderstood amongst men, and courage to speak God's message as His mouthpiece, even to those who reject His word. And all this is but the beginning of our need.

From whence did the prophets get their inspiration? I once heard a speaker declare that they found their inspiration in Nature. He argued that it was in the solitude of the wilderness that Moses heard the call to go down into Egypt, and that Deutero-Isaiah again and again appeals to Nature: "Lift up your eyes on high, and see who hath created these, that bringeth out their host by number" (Isa. xl. 26). He might with equal irrelevance have remembered that Jesus went out alone to the mountain top to pray. But Jesus did not go out to pray to Nature, or to commune with her. Nor was it Nature that spake to Moses a message of redemption, and set her seal on the burning sympathy of his heart. Nor did Nature give to Deutero-Isaiah the content of his message. The prophets found in Nature the evidence of the power of God, but it was not there they sought the revelation of His character. It is not seldom suggested that they got their inspiration by brooding on the ills of society, by studying the international situation, and suchlike activities. They would have scorned such

caricatures of themselves. For it was ever from their experience of God that they found their inspiration. They beheld Him in the immediacy of rich experience, and with eyes that were opened by that vision they looked out on the world. And to men they spoke primarily about Him, and called men to be like Him. God was the fount of their experience, and He the centre of their theme. And in every generation he whom God can use as His prophet must know a like profound experience.

The prophets were chosen by God. Their ministry was not one to which they aspired, but one from which they could not escape. Yet the choice of God was not arbitrary. The issue showed the wisdom of the choice. For the prophets found the call of God inescapable only because they were fitted to be used by Him. He chooses those who respond to His choice, and lays His constraint upon those who are sensitive to His touch. They heard the call with mingled trembling and elation, filled with wonder at the greatness of their high calling, and filled with trembling at the thought of their unworthiness for such a ministry. "Who am I," cried Moses, "that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" (Exod. iii. 11). The deliverance of those on whose sufferings he had so long brooded seemed too high a mission for him. "Woe is me! for I am undone," cried Isaiah, "because I am a man of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. vi. 5). For so great an honour, which filled him with unspeakable elation, he was all unworthy, and this consciousness filled him with trembling. Yet when he heard the voice saying: "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" he responded with humble consecration: "Here am I; send me" (Isa. vi. 8). That humble consecration, varying in its expression in the different prophets, marked them all. For the prophets were supremely teachable;

and only humility is teachable, and consecration alone can open the door of the heart to God.

The prophets were not creators; they were but clay in the hand of the Potter, but clay that yielded itself into His hand. They were not perfect, and we who are not perfect may find encouragement in that. The Potter could take them, with all their imperfections, and fashion of them a vessel fitted to His use. Nevertheless, the Potter was limited by the material He had to work with. This is ever so. All our limitations are limitations upon God, and an impoverishment not alone of ourselves, but of the world that God would serve through us.

But what of Christ? Is He not the fulfilment of prophecy, and in Him is not prophecy superseded? It is true that many words of the prophets find their deepest fulfilment in Him. Nor is this surprising. For it has been said that their utterances were based on their penetrating glimpses into the heart of God. And Christ is the effulgence of the divine glory, Himself the perfect manifestation of God's heart. Little wonder, then, that the prophetic utterances should find their perfect setting in Him, and that He alone should reveal the depth and fullness of meaning that was in them, transcending far the thought of the prophets who uttered them.

Where, then, is the need for our penetration of God's heart? If such penetration must lie behind all prophetic ministry, what room is there now for such ministry? Can we hope to progress beyond the revelation that is in Christ? Nay, indeed. But who has exhausted all the fullness of that revelation? There are treasures in it that none has yet explored. And when through the intimacy of our experience of God we learn new things of Him, they are only things that our blindness has prevented our seeing long since in Christ. We cannot progress beyond Him, nor can we apprehend all that is in

Him. At most we can perceive one or two aspects of the Heart that was perfectly unveiled in Him, but that is so largely veiled from us by our own limitations, and make them the basis of a living message which is essentially God's message through us, and which is vitally related to the needs of our own day.

CHAPTER IV

THE UNITY OF THE BIBLE

IT is sometimes said that the God of the Old Testament is not the God of the New Testament, and that it would be a gain to the Church if the Old Testament were removed from its Bible. Modern study of the Old Testament is not seldom blamed for this, but the idea is much more ancient than modern scholarship. In the second century the heretic Marcion adopted this view, and wrote a book to prove that the God of the Old Testament and the God of the New have nothing in common. On the other hand modern Old Testament scholars would reject it without hesitation, and any contemporary tendency to adopt it is found outside their ranks. That the process of inspiration is fundamentally the same in the two Testaments has been maintained above, and it has been assumed that the source of that inspiration in both is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, imperfectly known in the Old Testament, indeed, though ever seeking to reveal Himself to men, and perfectly revealed in Christ.

In recent years it has been rather in missionary circles than amongst scholars that the abolition of the Old Testament has been canvassed. To put the Old Testament into the hands of converts from non-Christian religions, and to teach them the older view of inspiration, is fraught with peril and apt to produce what have been called "Old Testament Christians". To impart a sounder view of the Old Testament has seemed to some a harder task than to banish the Old Testament from the Bible.

This consideration has been reinforced by the specious plea that in each land the religious classics of the country should replace the Old Testament as the more fitting introduction to the Gospel.

That the religious quality and value of the teachings of non-Christian religions finds a fuller appreciation in the Church than formerly is well known. We do not to-day regard all founders of such religions as impostors, but recognize a measure of divine revelation in them. The One Eternal God was seeking to reveal Himself there as well as in Israel, and in the measure of men's spiritual capacity, receptiveness, and response He was ever giving Himself to them. We recognize that we, who have but imperfectly entered into the rich inheritance which is ours, have little cause to speak with disrespect of those who often notably enlarged the meagre inheritance which they received. But this should not lead to such confusion of thought as lies behind the suggestion that non-Christian Scriptures should be substituted for the Old Testament.

The New Testament sprang out of the Old, and the Old formed the Bible of the Church before there was a New Testament. Indeed, the Old Testament formed the Bible of our Lord Himself, Whose own familiarity with it would not suggest that to Him it was of negligible worth. The Old Testament provided a preparation for the New along a continuous line, but between the non-Christian Scriptures and the New Testament there is a complete hiatus that cannot be got rid of by idle pretence. The one does lead to Christ, Who simply cannot be understood without it, while the others do not lead to Him at all.

Christianity is not based on myth or speculation; it is not a philosophy or a cultus alone. It is rooted in history, in the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth, a historical character Who lived in a particular land at a particular point of history. He entered into the traditions

of His people, shared their life, their thought, their worship. And though He brought a great, new religious impulse, continuity with the old as well as breach with the old marked it. From the soil of Judaism Christianity sprang, and neither Christ nor His teaching can be understood, save in relation to the Old Testament. "When the fullness of the time was come," says Paul, "God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law" (Gal. iv. 4). It is common to observe that the Roman empire, with its internal peace and centralized administration, and Greek culture, with its wide diffusion throughout the Mediterranean region, provided an unparalleled opportunity for the early spread of the Gospel. Had that been all that was needed, Jesus might just as well have been born in Athens or in Rome, and their religions have provided the background of the Gospel. It was not an accident, however, that He was born a Jew, as those who think that any religion can form an equally relevant introduction to the New Testament would seem to imply. He was born a Jew because the whole history of Israel was a preparation for Him, and because the religion of Judaism alone provided the inheritance He needed.

In the preceding chapters Jesus has been more than once referred to as the effulgence of God's glory, and as the supreme revelation of God. There was also another side of His ministry. He was the revealer of God, and equally the redeemer of man. He revealed God in Himself; He redeemed man in His work. But Christ and His work are not separate and distinct, for in His work He Himself, and in Him God, stood supremely unveiled. It was Christ crucified Who laid bare to mortal eye the heart of God; it was Christ crucified Who wrought redemption for man. And for both of these sides of His ministry, alike reaching their climax in the one moment of His death, the Old Testament provided the essential preparation.

In Jesus Christ God clothed Himself with mortality. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9). While this revelation of God in Christ is unique in its fullness, it finds abundant preparation in the thought of the Old Testament. "The spirit of the Lord clothed itself with Gideon" (Judges vi. 34). Here Gideon is conceived of as so possessed by the spirit of God that for the moment his activity is ascribed to God. Again and again we read of the spirit of God coming upon men with its imperious constraint, making them the instrument of His will and the vehicle of His message. That man is other than God lies deep at the root of all Old Testament teaching, but alongside it lies the profound conviction that man is also akin to God, so that in the indissoluble unity of a single personality God could make Himself known, the other than man revealing Himself in man. It is not to be supposed, however, that in Old Testament thought any man was ever what Jesus is in the thought of the New Testament. There we find the preparation for Him, not parallels to Him. For when in Old Testament thought God clothed Himself with a man, it was for a limited time, and for a limited object. It was rather God possessing a man to make him His instrument than finding in his personality the fitting garment for His own spirit.

In Jesus Christ God wrought redemption for man. "He shall save his people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21). "To you is born this day a Saviour" (Luke ii. 11). This redemption is conceived of as achieved by the death of Christ. "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, but with precious blood, even the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. i. 18 f.). Again, there is no parallel in the Old Testament, but there is abundant preparation. For the Old Testament proclaims that God is a redeeming God, and recognizes that man's supreme need is for deliverance from sin.

Israel believed that God was a saving God, not because some thinker evolved the conception from his fertile mind, but because He had revealed Himself in their history as a saving God. He had chosen Israel, when Israel was weak and in bondage, and He had sent Moses down to Egypt in His name to lead them forth. By a great and wonderful deliverance He had delivered them, and through all their history they could not forget it. That deliverance was regulative for all their thinking of God. They believed that He was the controller of history just because it was in history that He had revealed His character to them. They believed that He was the controller of Nature just because He had used Nature as the instrument of that deliverance. In the subsequent history God shows Himself a saving God repeatedly, and uses both Nature and men in whom is His spirit to effect deliverance.

But if physical and national deliverance marked the beginnings of their relationships with God, they rose to the perception of the need for something deeper. The prophets, as has been said, thought of patriotism in other than political terms. To them inner worth was of greater moment than outer glory, and the supreme need of the nation was for purity of faith and life, for the righteousness of God to roll as a mighty river through all the life of the nation (Amos v. 24). Nor was this thought characteristic of prophets alone. It lies at the heart of all the ritual of the post-exilic days. For it has ceased to be fashionable to pour contempt on the post-exilic period as one of decadence and sterile forms, in contrast to the creativeness of the prophets. It is realized to-day that it was in the post-exilic period that the prophetic books were compiled, though much of the material they contain goes back to pre-exilic days. But the men who collected and edited their writings were men who honoured the prophets. And by their ritual they desired to conserve

the work of the prophets, and keep the faith of Israel purer than that against which the prophets had protested. And in their ritual they sought to embody the principles that were so vital to the prophets.

The prophets had declaimed against sacrifices that were not the expression of the loyalty of men's hearts to their God and His will; the ritual of post-exilic days sought to make sacrifice the vehicle of faith, and the instrument of purification in the lives of the people. The ethical teachings of the prophets were reflected in some of the many sides of the conception of sin. That the thought of sacrifice and its efficacy was also many-sided needs no demonstration, and it lies beyond our immediate field to analyse the variety of elements that entered into it. Suffice it to observe that deeply engrained in post-exilic thought is the need of the sinner for cleansing, and the conception of sacrifice as able to cleanse his conscience. It is this thought of sin as creating a gulf between man and God, and of sacrifice as bridging the gulf and cleansing the sinner, which prepared the way for the redemption wrought in Christ. Sacrifice was man's offering to God to achieve his redemption from his profoundest need. But from of old Israel's redeemer was her God. When these two thoughts became fused together, they yielded the conception of sacrifice which should be not alone man's offering to God, but equally God's act, whereby He who had saved her from Egypt should save her from her deeper need; and that conception we find in the New Testament thought of Christ.

The two Testaments are one, therefore, not in the sense that they duplicate a single message. Were that the case either could be dispensed with without serious loss. They are one in the sense in which the parts of a musical cadence are one. Without the final chord it is incomplete, a process that does not reach its goal; on the other hand,

the final chord, however beautiful it may be as a chord, is robbed of its full significance without the chords that should precede it. The two Testaments are one in that together they form a single whole. To vary the figure, while still finding it in music, the New Testament is the final movement of the sonata, gathering up in its recapitulation the strains of the exposition, but making them new by weaving them afresh and adding to them, and fully intelligible only in the light of what has gone before it.

As an instance of the reweaving of strands we may take three which in the Old Testament are separate and distinct, which in the New Testament are blended in a unity, with the consequent modification of all. In 2 Sam. vii. 16 we are told that the prophet Nathan bore to David the promise: "Thine house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." This thought of the enduring glory of the house of David entered deeply into the heart of Israel, and when Hosea predicted the end of the northern kingdom, he promised that after an interval the Davidic monarchy should be restored (Hos. iii. 5). But with its characteristic individualizing capacity Hebrew thought concentrated on a single figure who should gather into Himself this glory of the Davidic line, and whose reign should be world-wide and eternal. "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with judgement and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever" (Isa. ix. 6 f.). It is to be observed that while it is clear that an earthly political kingdom is envisaged, at the base

of the conception was something nobler than a crude nationalism. It was to be a rule that should ensure universal peace and justice amongst men. "His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord: . . . And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. . . . They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. xi. 3 ff.). It was around the term Messiah that all this thought crystallized in the later Judaism of the inter-testamental period, though the term is not characteristic of the Old Testament usage, and in the days of Jesus the advent of this Davidic scion was eagerly awaited.

The book of Daniel presents us with a fundamentally different conception of the coming age of righteousness. In Chapter VII the author describes, under the figure of four beasts rising out of the sea, four successive earthly empires, followed by their destruction and the setting up of a new and enduring kingdom, that should embrace within its bounds all nations. The coming kingdom he symbolized by a human figure, "one like unto a son of man" (vii. 13), in contrast to the beasts that could alone fittingly symbolize the other kingdoms, and it was represented as coming with the clouds of heaven instead of as arising out of the sea, to signify its loftier character and source. But just as the beasts were figures for kingdoms, so the "son of man" was a figure for the coming kingdom. Hence, in the interpretation of the vision, when the symbol is explained, the dominion is given "to the people of the saints of the Most High" (vii. 27), and there is no mention of any individual leader for the kingdom. The establishment of this kingdom is in no way connected with the house of David, but is thought of as being set up by the divine breaking into history,

and overthrowing all that rears itself against God, followed by the delivering of the sovereignty by God Himself into the hands of His saints. But again we find the inevitable individualizing tendency, and before long the "son of man" who at first symbolized the kingdom became thought of as the divinely sent leader of the kingdom, and a hope parallel to the messianic hope, though clearly distinguishable from it, sprang up. The Son of Man, Who should come with the clouds of heaven, was no scion of the house of David, who should come forth from Bethlehem-Ephrathah (Mic. v. 2), but like the Messiah, he should establish a world-wide and eternal kingdom of righteousness, and sweep aside all who stood against Him.

A third conception is found in the Servant Songs that are found in the book of Isaiah (xlii. 1-4; xlix. 1-6; l. 4-9; lii. 13-liii. 12), and notably in the fourth of these. In these songs we have the conception of a Servant of the Lord, to Whom should be entrusted the mission of being a light to the nations, and of leading them to God. He is not thought of as crushing those who oppose Him, but as gentle (xlii. 2 f.) and patient under suffering (l. 6), and in the final song it is made clear that His sufferings are the very instrument of His triumph. He suffers not for Himself, but for others, and by means of His pains He effects atonement for their sins, and so fulfils His divine mission. Here the divergence from the thought of the Messiah is much greater than in the case of the Son of Man. The Servant is a completely human figure, called from the womb to be God's Servant (xlix. 1), and in no way linked with the house of David, or with an advent with the clouds of heaven. There is no suggestion that He will establish a political kingdom on earth; His function is solely spiritual, to send forth the light of the true religion through the earth, and to offer Himself a sacrifice for sin, and thus lead men to God. Into the

interminable discussions as to the identity of the Servant in the author's thought, it is unnecessary to go here. Broadly there are two schools, of which the one believes that in these Songs, as in the surrounding chapters, the Servant is a figure for the Israelite nation, or the pure within it—much as the "Son of Man" was originally a figure for "the people of the saints of the Most High" —while the other believes that the Servant was in the author's thought an individual, either historical or ideal. I am not persuaded that the truth lies with either school. Just as in the case of the Messiah and the Son of Man an originally collective conception became individualized, so it is probable that here too the same thing happened. But here the development seems to have taken place in the writer's own thought, and while he began with the thought of Israel as God's Servant, he moved on to think of an individual who should embody in Himself this great mission of the Servant. Especially is this so in the fourth Song, which seems to me to have an individual and not a community clearly in mind. In that case the individual would be essentially an ideal figure, rather than some figure of the past.

That the three conceptions of the Messiah, the Son of Man and the Suffering Servant are separate and distinct is at once clear, and even after they had all become individualized, they remained so, and while the conception of the work of the Messiah approximated to that of the Son of Man, the conception of the person of the one remained quite distinct from that of the other. In the case of the Suffering Servant, both person and work were unique in their conception.

Nevertheless, these three streams of thought all came together in the New Testament, and Christ is found to be the fulfilment of the hopes that centred round them all. Nor can it be doubted that Jesus Himself believed that all these hopes led to Him, and found in Him their

realization. So far as our records go, He never directly called Himself the Messiah, or Christ, though His accusers declared that He had done so (Luke xxiii. 2). But when He asked His disciples how they thought of Him, and Peter replied "Thou art the Christ", He does not seem to have denied the identification, though He did charge them not to publish the idea (Mark viii. 29 f.). At His trial we read that the High Priest asked Him directly "Art thou the Christ?" and He replied "I am" (Mark xiv. 61 f.). His characteristic name for Himself was "Son of Man", and this we find frequently on His lips. He does not describe Himself as the Servant of the Lord, but there is ample evidence that the Servant Songs, and especially the fourth, profoundly affected His thought. Moreover, it is clear that in His mind these three originally separate ideas were blended into a single idea. When the High Priest asked Him if He were the Christ, He immediately linked the term with that other term, "the Son of Man"; "I am: and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power" (Mark xiv. 62). Similarly, when Peter makes his confession, Jesus again employs the other term, but fills it with a content derived from the Servant Songs: "And he began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things" (Mark viii. 31). Similarly in Mark x. 42–45, where the thought throughout is to be understood only in the light of the fourth Servant Song, the actual term used of Jesus is again "the Son of Man": "Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it is not so among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant: and whosoever would be first among you shall be the slave of all. For verily the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."

That the blending of the ideas involved their mutual modification needs no demonstration. If He was the Messiah, it was not to restore the political kingdom of the house of David that He had come; if He was the Son of Man, the Kingdom of God He had come to establish was no earthly kingdom, but one purely spiritual. It would be established, not by His consuming with the breath of His nostrils all who should oppose Him, but by the patience and gentleness and vicarious suffering of the Servant of the Lord.

Again, in the New Testament thought of the death of Christ we find a blending of several streams of Old Testament thought. The death of Christ is itself unique, without any parallel in the Old Testament story. Yet every New Testament attempt to understand it and to interpret it is in terms of Old Testament thought. Jesus Himself, as has just been said, interpreted it in advance in terms of the Suffering Servant passage. His death was a vicarious offering to God, freely offered on behalf of those at whose hands He should suffer.

This alone, however, is quite inadequate to do justice to the many-sided faith of the New Testament. For Christ's death is no mere *opus operatum* which automatically releases mankind from its sin by appeasing an angry deity. It is rather God's act for the removal of that which stands in the way of fellowship with Himself. And the obstacle to fellowship is not the sullenness of God, but the sin of man. It is the manifestation of divine grace in action. We are "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation" (Rom. iii. 24 f.). But the whole doctrine of divine grace, and divine initiative in redemption, is born in the Old Testament. It was of the grace of God that He chose Israel, all ignorant of His name, when she was a bondservant in Egypt, and her deliverance was both initiated and effected

by God alone. It was He who sent Moses to bring her out, He who broke Pharaoh's proud heart and caused him to release her, and He who overwhelmed in disaster the Egyptian hosts and brought Israel out "with a high hand and a stretched out arm". In that act, as has been already said, Israel found the character of God revealed, and it is the same fundamental character of God which lies behind the New Testament doctrine of redemption.

But if divine grace is the spring of redemption, it is in terms of the Old Testament sacrificial system that the Cross of Christ as the organ of redemption is interpreted. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews associates it with the solemn ritual of the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest "once in the year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people" (Heb. ix. 7) entered the innermost shrine of the Temple. The death of Christ is interpreted as an offering transcending that, in that it did not need to be repeated from year to year, but was offered once for all (Heb. ix. 12, 25 f.), transcending it, too, in that Christ Himself constituted an offering that far surpassed "the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of an heifer" (Heb. ix. 13), and transcending it yet again in that He who was sacrificed consented to the offering, so that He became both High Priest and victim (Heb. ix. 11, 14).

It has been said that the Old Testament conception of the efficacy of sacrifice was complex, and not to be explained in terms of any single idea. And the same is true of the New Testament thought on the way in which Christ's sacrifice of Himself to God effects man's redemption. That it is an offering to God and for man, by One who is Himself both the revelation of God and the representative of man, enters deeply into its thought. But it is equally an offering that effects a change in man. It does not change God's attitude to him so much as reveal that attitude; but it does change man, so that he

becomes a "new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17) in Christ. "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God" (Heb. ix. 14). This rests on that profound view of sin which is found in the Old Testament, and on the conception of sacrifice as the instrument of its removal. "On this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins ye shall be clean before the Lord" (Lev. xvi. 30).

Nor does the mere sacrifice effect atonement, at any rate in the deeper thought of the Old Testament. The prophets, as has already been said, protested against hollow sacrifices which did not express the inner loyalty of the sacrificer, and there are passages outside the prophets which declare the primary importance of that inner spirit. "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (1 Sam. xv. 22). "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Ps. li. 17). The post-exilic ritual is not designed to serve people with a venial view of sin, people who sin lightly and who sacrifice carelessly, but people who validate their sacrifices by the humility and repentance of their hearts, and who express the sincerity of their confession of sin in their sacrifice. In this we find the preparation for the New Testament teaching that the death of Christ, though itself a sacrifice offered once for all and of universal significance, does not avail without faith. Just as the ancient sacrifices were validated by the spirit of those on whose behalf they were offered, so we by repentance and faith validate for ourselves the sacrifice of Christ. The rich inheritance of redemption from sin in Christ awaits us, to become ours when we by faith become one with Him, identifying ourselves with Him who was crucified so that His sacrifice becomes the vehicle of our

submission to God. "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by His blood," or, as Goodspeed renders it, "For God showed him publicly dying as a sacrifice of reconciliation to be taken advantage of through faith" (Rom. iii. 25).

One of the notable differences between the religion of the Old Testament and Christianity is that the former is associated with a ritual of animal sacrifice, whereas the latter knows none. Yet even here, it will appear from what has been said that there is a real unity between the Testaments, in that the New Testament offers in Christ the satisfaction of that fundamental need to satisfy which sacrifice was designed. Israel had learned that more important than sacrifice was the spirit that prompted it, and the end to which it was directed, so that when Christianity continued to foster that spirit and to attain that end, its link with what had gone before was more vital than its breach from it.

So it is, too, with another notable difference between Judaism and Christianity. The one is a national religion, and the other is a universal religion. In the post-exilic period the Jews developed the spirit of exclusiveness, and sought to guard themselves as far as possible from alien contacts. Politically the nation was not independent, save in the Maccabaean and Hasmonaean period, and alien influences were inevitably established in their land. But they sought to guard their faith from such influence, and to that end Nehemiah and Ezra opposed inter-marriage with foreigners. It cannot be too strongly insisted that this did not spring from any hostility to foreigners, as such, or to any selfish desire to keep the blessings of their religion to themselves alone. It sprang from loyalty to their God, and from a great sense of the enduring worth of their religious inheritance. It was to preserve their faith, not to corner their privileges, that exclusiveness sprang.

Any student of the period will recognize that Judaism, in spite of this exclusiveness, was in great peril of extinction. Aggressive alien influences pervaded the life of the nation, attended by all the glamour of the wealth and power and superior culture of the ruling power, and not a few welcomed those influences. Fundamentally they threatened that religion which was Israel's noblest inheritance, wrought out in the experience of so many of her sons, and the very magnitude of the threat would inevitably drive the loyal to ever greater exclusiveness, and the strengthening of the walls of their faith against the world without. To sneer at their narrowness, without understanding its cause, is the mark of ignorance rather than of enlightenment. It is wiser to acknowledge our debt to the creators of Judaism, with all its hardness and narrowness, and to thank God for those who were faithful when faithfulness was so hard.

Nor must we forget that while Judaism shut out, so far as it could, influences that were alien to their faith, it was ever prepared to admit persons who were alien by birth, but who desired to renounce those alien influences. Proselytism was a feature of Judaism, as well as particularism. But the proselyte had to identify himself with the Jewish people, as well as with its faith, which was always primarily a national faith. Nor were proselytes ever more than numerically few compared with those adherents of Judaism who were of Jewish blood.

Christianity, on the other hand, from its earliest days, spread beyond the bounds of the Jewish people amongst whom it took its rise. It burst through the bounds of exclusiveness, and carried its message far and wide, so that before long its adherents of non-Jewish blood far outnumbered those of Jewish blood. That this bursting of the barriers was not effected without some misgiving and questioning is clear from the records of the book of the Acts. Nevertheless it was decisively

effected, and in the Apostolic Age we find the point reached, which is expressed in the already quoted words of Paul: "There can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male and female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 28).

No greater contrast can be conceived than between the exuberant spiritual aggressiveness of Christianity, and the protective defensiveness of Jewish particularism. Nevertheless the latter had served its purpose in preparing for the former. Its leaders failed to see that it had fulfilled its mission, failed to welcome the tremendous religious impulse which Jesus brought, failed to realize that the seed which in Him burst forth into new and more splendid life was that which they had so diligently preserved. Yet they had treasured in the Old Testament the promise of the establishment of a world faith in their God. For the preparation for this universal religion lies once more in the Old Testament, and the two Testaments are again knit together in the unity of a single process in the formulation and fulfilment of this great hope.

In the Servant Songs, the mission of the Servant, to be achieved through suffering, is described as a world-wide mission. "It is too light a thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa. xlix. 6). And outside the Servant Songs we find frequent expression of the same expectation that the God of Israel will become the God of all men. "Turn unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. By myself have I sworn, the word has gone forth from my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Isa. xlv. 22 f.); "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isa. xi. 9);

"And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go up and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths" (Isa. ii. 2 f.); "All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn unto the Lord: And all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee" (Ps. xxii. 27). These are but a few of the many passages that could be cited, passages to which the early Church did turn to vindicate its claim that it was the true heir of the Old Testament, and the true heir of both the promises and the tasks of Judaism.

Yet again, the Last Supper of Jesus with His disciples can only be understood in the light of the Old Testament, and once more we find the inner unity between hope and fulfilment. Whether the Last Supper was itself a Passover meal, as the first three Gospels say, or a meal on the day preceding the Passover, as the Fourth Gospel says, it was naturally and inevitably linked with the thought of the Passover in the minds of Jesus and His disciples. The Passover was a feast of remembrance of the grace of God revealed in the ancient deliverance from Egypt; to them this feast was the new focus of remembrance, symbolizing the new deliverance wrought by Christ. "This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me" (Luke xxii. 19). But more than that. It was the symbol of a new covenant. "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (Luke xxii. 20). The religion of Israel was a covenant religion, established in the covenant of Sinai, and the whole idea of a religion established in a covenant is derived from Israel. But Jeremiah had dreamed of a new covenant, deeper and richer than the old covenant, a covenant whose law

should be engraved not on tables of stone, but on the living tables of men's hearts, giving rise to a religion not of obedience to external ordinances, but one of deep and intimate fellowship, bringing the hearts of men into such perfect accord with the will of God that in living out the impulses of their own hearts they would equally be obeying Him (Jer. xxxi. 31 ff.).

All of these are but a few of the ways in which the religion of the New Testament, though undeniably different from the religion of the Old Testament in many respects, is yet linked indissolubly with the religion of the Old Testament. Others could easily be added, and some will emerge below. Moreover, it should not be forgotten that the Psalms have become the vehicle of praise and prayer for the Church equally with the Synagogue. Nor should we forget the vast treasury of spiritual experience preserved in the Old Testament. To lose the Old Testament from our Bible, despite all the difficulties that attach to its understanding and interpretation, would be to impoverish ourselves immeasurably. That in practice many people have deleted most of the Old Testament from their Bibles, by the simple process of ignoring it, may be true. But they are not the people whose faith is strong and clear, but too often those who have substituted an amiable sentimentality for the religion of the New Testament, and their abandonment of the Old Testament has carried with it the abandonment of much of the New—as it did with Marcion.

CHAPTER V

THE USE OF THE BIBLE

THE Bible is, before all things, a religious book. This has already been repeatedly emphasized, but to it we must return to see how this fact should determine our use of the Bible. If we would truly understand it, it is well to give it scientific study; yet if we give it only scientific study, we shall miss its richest meaning. The patient study of the date and origin of its books, of the sources employed in their compilation, and the method of that compilation; the study of all the vast wealth of material now available to us, disclosing the background of world history in which Israelite history must be set, and the cultural and religious outlook of Israel's neighbours and masters; the study of her own religious growth, and the examination of the religious ideas found in the Old Testament and their relations with those of the New; all of these things are abundantly worth while, because they enable us to read it with understanding and to see it in true perspective. But if we have only this kind of understanding, even though our knowledge is encyclopaedic, and have no appreciation of the sublimity of its message, we have not learned to read it.

On the other hand, if we read the Bible as a scientifically reliable authority on the creation of the world and the structure of the universe; if we treat its narratives as exact records of fact, to be accepted implicitly and uncritically; if we treat its prophetic passages, whether in the Old Testament or the New, as knotty puzzles, to which, if we are clever, we can find the key and so

peer into the future; if we do any of these things, we use the Bible for a purpose for which it was never intended. It was not written to be a scientific and historical text-book, but a book of religion.

It is true that the Bible contains some excellent historical writing, and that, in particular, the books of Samuel and Kings rank high amongst ancient writings for historical fidelity. But even they were not written primarily to give exact knowledge of the past, but to inculcate religious teaching. Hence the reign of Omri, though it must have been of considerable importance, is passed over in a few verses; and though Ahab has more extensive treatment, on account of the religious conflict of his reign, not a word is said of his share in the coalition of a dozen western states that opposed Shalmaneser III at the battle of Karkar. Even where we have accurate history, it is only history written from a religious point of view, and therefore selective.

Moreover, much of the narrative writing of the Bible is clearly idealized and exaggerated. Even so stout a defender of the accuracy of the Bible as Sir Charles Marston finds it impossible to accept the Flood story as it stands. Believing firmly that it rests on an actual flood that occurred in the South Babylonian plains, he finds it hard to believe that it was of a universal character, or that an Ark once contained all that was left of humanity and of the lower creatures, and observes that it has been calculated that to do this the Ark must have been about the size of the Isle of Wight.[1]

It is true, again, that the Bible contains many predictions. But the prophets predicted the future only as arising out of the present and not a distant future that was unrelated to their own time. There was, indeed, the messianic hope for more distant days, but that was

[1] *The New Knowledge about the Old Testament*, p. 46.

expressed in more general terms, without any indication as to when that messianic age would dawn. In the later period, when prophecy was replaced by apocalyptic—which was not concerned with a future that should arise out of the present, but with a future that should consist in a divine breaking into the present, and a catastrophic ending of the present world order—the consummation of the age was looked for in the immediate future. But beyond all prediction, whether of the prophetic or apocalyptic order, prophets and apocalyptists were charged with a living religious message to men, and if we but study their predictions, and consider the time and manner of their fulfilment, whether we understand or misunderstand those predictions, we shall miss their true value.

It is impossible to insist too strongly on this. The books of the Bible were written for religious purposes. They were collected together and treasured by people who found religious strength in their use. They have been publicly read in synagogue and church, not in order that the faithful might have accurate knowledge about the past or the future, but that they might be brought nigh unto God, and receive His word into their hearts. And unless we find in them spiritual nurture for ourselves, and make them the vehicle of spiritual enrichment to others, we are failing miserably to find their true use.

It is sometimes feared that the modern study of the Bible has made impossible this sort of use. In truth, it has made possible the richer religious use. It has delivered us from the notion that the cruder ideas found in the Old Testament are, or ever have been, true ideas of God, and it has taught us to consider them in relation to the age and outlook from which they sprang. It has warned us that we cannot regard every teaching of the Old Testament or the New as a direct and authoritative message of God. Yet it has taught us to find, even in the

very crudities of the cruder passages, the Word of the God who was striving to make Himself known to men. It has given us a historical understanding of the Bible to be a basis for the spiritual understanding, and not a substitute for it.

Let us take in illustration the story of Abraham's narrowly averted sacrifice of Isaac. We can read it as an item in the biography of Abraham, and accept it as no more than a fresh fact in the patriarch's life. There is no religious value in that. For it is not in the truth or falsity of the story that religious value lies, but in the spiritual message it enshrines, and it depends on whether we receive that spiritual message or not as to whether the story has religious value for us. Jesus found His highest lessons again and again in common experiences that other people passed unnoticed. A sower sowing seed, a woman losing a coin, a keen merchant seizing a bargain—these were all matters of common experience with no intrinsic religious quality. Yet Jesus found in them a religious message, because of the way He looked at them. Others saw these things, as most of us still do, as dull "facts". In the same way we can regard the story of Abraham and Isaac as a mere "fact", spiritually neutral, and be nothing profited.

Or again, we can read the story in the light of the critical study of the Old Testament and merely perceive its significance in the history of religion. Israel lived in a world where human sacrifice was by no means unknown. There are archaeological evidences of human sacrifice in Canaan, particularly associated with the foundation of buildings. Probably in prehistoric times Israel's ancestors used to sacrifice all their first-born children in infancy. In the Pentateuchal law it is laid down that all first-born were sacred to the deity, but whereas the first-born of the herds and flocks had to be sacrificed, the first-born of human parents were to be redeemed by a

substitute. Since this provision stands in the oldest of the Pentateuchal sources, it was certainly in very early times that Israelite first-born ceased to be sacrificed. But the voluntary sacrifice of children is found in historical times, both in Israel and amongst her neighbours. We learn from 2 Kings iii that when Mesha, the king of Moab, was in dire straits, besieged in his capital, he sacrificed his eldest son on the wall of the city in the sight of the besiegers and the besieged. This was not a proof of his callous indifference to the life of his son, but the offer to his god of what he valued above all else on earth. Again, we read that Ahaz, in the latter part of the eighth century B.C., "caused his son to pass through the fire" (2 Kings xvi. 3), i.e. he sacrificed his son. Possibly this was when he was in terror at the invasion of the confederate armies of Israel and Aram, and was inspired by the same motive as Mesha's sacrifice of his son. In the following century we find frequent references to the same practice of child-sacrifice, and it called forth the noble protest of Micah vi. 6–8. Yet even so, the protest was unheeded, and there are ample evidences that in the time of Jeremiah the same practices went on. But this story of Abraham and Isaac shows that far back before this, it had been perceived in Israel that even the voluntary sacrifice of a human life was not desired by God. For this story stands in the second of the main documents which formed the source of the Pentateuch, dated commonly in the eighth century B.C., and it represents the recognition that human sacrifice was not desired by God as having come through the concrete experience of one in a yet earlier age. I do not find it difficult to believe that the story is substantially true. The audible voice from heaven may belong but to the artistry of the story, though it may equally find a psychological explanation. But it is in no way incredible that one who was on the point of sacrificing his son should have been

impressed by the singular appearance at that moment of a ram caught in a thicket, and so have changed his purpose. And it could be just as truly God working in him and his decision, whether or no he heard a voice. Illumination comes not only from supernatural sounds that strike the ear, but as often from experience, and I can easily believe that when God wanted to teach men that He did not delight in human sacrifice, He did it through a definite experience that came to a man. And perceiving its significance for himself, he revealed it also to others, so that it became a part of the inheritance of Israel, for all who would receive it, that God did not desire human sacrifices.

All this, however, may yet be spiritually neutral, and I may read the story but as a moment in the religious progress of mankind without thereby being spiritually enriched. That human sacrifice is not desired by God has become so completely accepted by us that it is no longer a religious message. But the story is not merely of a man who perceived that God did not want him to sacrifice his son. It is the story of a man who loved God enough to sacrifice his son. Abraham loved his God as well as they who sacrificed their children, and what kept him from offering Isaac was not the coldness of his love, but the realization that it was not God's will. Though he came to realize that there are sacrifices that God does not ask, he first realized that there are none a man should be unwilling to make. That is a rich principle, which still comes with its spiritual challenge to us, to be worked out in the terms of our own lives.

And deeper even than that, because of wider application, is the perception that common experience may be the vehicle of a divine message. Read the story merely in a dull, matter-of-fact way, and concentrate attention on the audible voice from heaven, and this may be missed.

God does not speak to us in a voice from heaven. But read it as I have suggested, not as something wholly supernatural and unrelated to our experience, but as the story of a man who perceived the finger of God in the experiences of his life, whose spirit was teachable, and who, because of his response to what God was saying to him through his experience, was led into a larger truth himself, and led others also into it, and it becomes a revelation of the significance of experience.

That is a message which runs all through the Bible. Moses, brooding on the wrongs of his people, came to feel a divine urge to go to their aid. God visited him through the sympathy of his heart, and he recognized God, and went in His name. And so, when he led the people out of Egypt, it was not to take to himself the credit for his sympathy and service, but to lead them to consecrate themselves in gratitude to the God Who had used him. Many in history have had sympathy for the down-trodden, and have worked to liberate them from oppression. But not all have found God through their sympathy, or have made their liberating ministry a spiritual experience. Similarly, again, Hosea found a new understanding of God through the very faithlessness of his wife, and the agony it caused him. His experience of a faithless partner was not unique. But his finding of God in that experience, and its conversion into a spiritual enrichment, made it unique. Or again, Jeremiah, in a loneliness that was unrelieved, hated and persecuted, found a new understanding of the meaning of prayer, and a new perception that the essence of religion is inner. He realized that the deepest ritual of religion is not that of the Temple, but the soul's traffic with God. Each of these cases proclaims that the vital thing is not the experience itself, but the response to the experience, and all of these who responded aright through their response brought enrichment to themselves

and a larger inheritance for others. And herein is a living religious message to us. We are apt to judge our life by the experiences we meet, instead of recognizing that the all-important thing is our response to experience. Life for us, as for Abraham and Moses and Hosea and Jeremiah, and many another whose story lies in the Old Testament, may be aglow with God.

But what of miracle in the Old Testament? In treating the experience of these Old Testament characters as not something wholly other than our experience, but as something comparable with our experience, differing indeed in its contents, but alike in its essence, am I not quietly evading the question of the Old Testament miracles? Can we believe the Old Testament miracles? If we can, do they not mark these ancient experiences in so many cases as wholly other than our experiences? For we do not experience such miracles. Or, if we cannot accept these miracles, is it merely a rationalism that ultimately would shut God out of His world that prevents us?

By earlier generations of Christians miracles were accepted as divine authentications of revelation. In our generation, however, miracle is a great difficulty, and so far from the miracles of the Bible authenticating it, they form a stumbling-block to its acceptance. And we are not seldom told that a scientific age has left no room for miracles. I think we need first to define what we mean by miracle. Let us take for our purpose a simple and broad definition—a divine intervention in the course of events. For myself, I say at once and emphatically that I believe firmly in the credibility of miracle in that sense. Nothing else seems to me to be possible on a theistic view of the world. If God has merely created the world and handed it over to natural law in such a way that He is no longer free to initiate events, or interfere in the chain of causation, then we revert

to an arid Deism that relegates Him to the confines of His universe, and assign Him a lesser place in the world of reality than we occupy ourselves. We can initiate events. Is it reasonable to suppose that God alone is shut out of the world? If there is a God at all, surely we must believe that He has not less power to initiate events than we have, but far more. But when God intervenes, it is not to suspend the laws of the universe, but to use them to achieve His will. He controls men, and He controls the forces of nature, and makes the one serve His purpose as well as the other. But as His control of men is not inconsistent with human freedom, so His control of nature is not inconsistent with natural law.

It will be seen, then, that while I hold the possibility of miracle, I have not committed myself to the acceptance of every recorded marvel in the Old Testament. Indeed, the very terms in which I have expressed my faith in miracle will shut out many of them. For the marvels recorded in the Old Testament are of many kinds. We have to examine the record in each case, and scrutinize its evidence. For an easy and undiscriminating credulity is as unwise as a blind and *a priori* scepticism.

In the Old Testament we find recorded a number of occasions when God used natural forces to serve His purpose and help His people. Let us start with a simple instance—the victory by the Israelites under the leadership of Deborah. In her time the Vale of Esdraelon was still in Canaanite hands, and the highlands to the north and south were in Israelite hands. But the Israelite tribes were not united, and the Canaanites, by dealing with them piecemeal, were increasingly dominating them. And Deborah saw that it was essential for the Israelites to the north and the south of the valley to act together to throw off the yoke. She collected the tribes to the south, and urged Barak to collect those to the north, and the two groups met on the slopes of Mount

Tabor. The Canaanites, under their leader Sisera, equipped with chariots, gathered to crush them. But chariots were of little use on the mountain slopes, and the Israelites dreaded to meet them in the plain. So, since the chariots could not mount the slopes, it was for the Israelites to choose the moment of attack. And in the moment of their need there came a downpour of rain. In a few moments the soft earth was a morass, and the chariots were useless. The Israelites, light and mobile, rushed down the slopes, and the Canaanites, with their now immobile chariotry and plunging horses, were at their mercy. And a great victory was wrought for Israel, a victory which Deborah celebrated in a fine and spirited song. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera" she sang (Judges v. 20), and well she might. That, of course, is not to be taken literally. It is a poetic expression of the historic fact that the victory was achieved, not so much by the heroism of Israelite warriors, as by the timely help of natural forces. Was it an accident, a mere coincidence? Israel was in no doubt that it was God's intervention to help her, and therefore a miracle within the terms of our definition.

Take another simple case. In 1 Sam. xiv we have the story of the whole Philistine army being put to flight by Jonathan and his armour-bearer. At the beginning of the story Jonathan expresses the faith that God can save by few just as well as by many, and then it goes on to tell how a great victory was achieved by these two men only, the rest of the Israelite band of Saul only joining in the pursuit when the Philistine army was completely demoralized. That may seem an incredible story until it is examined. The Philistine camp was on high ground, with an outpost on a spur looking down on a valley, in which was a wood. Jonathan and his companion came out from the cover of the wood and the Philistine outpost hurled down its taunts to them,

challenging them to come up. Jonathan, whose whole life had been spent there, knew the ground, and knew where he could climb the hill without being seen by the Philistines. In a short time his head rose close to the nearest Philistine, who had little dreamed that the challenge would be accepted, and who was wholly unnerved because taken off his guard. Without waiting to see how many were following Jonathan, he cried out that the Israelites had come, and communicated his terror to his companions, who all set off to run to the camp. But again Jonathan knew every inch of the ground, whereas to the Philistines it was unfamiliar. Hence he could traverse the rough ridge quicker than they and, overtaking them one by one, he dealt them swift blows from behind that felled them one after the other, each filling his fellows with deeper terror by the cry with which he fell. And when, breathless and demoralized, the remnant broke into the camp with the cry that the Israelites were upon them, panic broke out in the camp, each man dashing to get his weapons, and confusion reigning everywhere. Some Hebrews, who had been impressed for menial work in the camp, improved the opportunity and, seizing what weapons they could, joined in the mêlée. Here the victory was wrought by the aid of psychological factors. The unexpected emergence of two men's heads threw a few into panic, and their panic was soon communicated to the larger body. There is nothing at all incredible in this. But was it an accident? Or was it God? Again, Israel was in no doubt.

But sometimes the problem is much more complex than this. What of Joshua and the sun standing still? What of the crossing of the Red Sea, with the water standing in walls on either side? What of the walls of Jericho falling down flat at the sound of trumpets? Here we have sheer marvels—the suspension of the laws

of nature. Shall we reject these? And if so, is it merely on *a priori* grounds? Let us examine them.

In the case of Joshua and the sun we have a prose account, with a fragment of poetry embedded in it. The poetry is undoubtedly the older, and it is thoroughly credible. The prose account heightens the marvel by saying the sun did not go down for a whole day, and completely changes the whole character of the incident. Consider the circumstances. The Gibeonites were threatened with destruction because of the treaty they had made with Joshua. and sent an appeal to him for help. Joshua was at Gilgal when the message reached him, and immediately he made a forced march by night to fall upon the enemy. As he drew near it was towards the hour of morning, and he cried to the sun and moon to stand still. Clearly what he wants is the darkness, under cover of which he can fall upon the unsuspecting foe. And that is what he asks for. "Sun, be silent upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon. And the sun was silent, and the moon stood, until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies" (Joshua x. 12 f.). "Sun, be silent." Surely that does not mean "Sun, blaze forth from the heaven", but "Sun, do not shine". It was the darkness, not the light, that Joshua wanted. And since Aijalon is west of Gibeon the standpoint of the speaker is apparently between them, with the moon to the west and the sun to the east, whence again it is clear that it is morning; and it is not the prolonging of the day, but of the night that is desired. And the need was answered. A storm was brewing, as the context shows, and the morning was unusually dark, giving to Joshua the help he needed. This is wholly credible, and once more we have the timely help of natural forces in which Israel could find the hand of God. The prose account is in complete disagreement with this. It heightens the miracle by making it something quite

alien to nature, and supposes the day was unnaturally prolonged to double the ordinary length. In such a case it would be gratuitous to prefer the later prose account, and its rejection does not depend on an unwillingness to believe in miracle.

Or turn to the story of the crossing of the Red Sea. Again there are two accounts lying side by side, the one from the earliest of the Pentateuchal sources, and the other from the latest of the sources. The earlier narrative again involves no unnatural event, though an unusual and timely one; while the later presupposes a complete suspension of the laws of nature and the utter madness of the Egyptians. According to the earlier account, the Israelites were on the shore of the sea when they saw the pursuing Egyptians. Their deliverance came through a strong east wind which caused the waters to go back all night. An east wind would not blow a path through the water, but it might contribute to the causing of a particularly low tide. And this appears to be what happened. There was a particularly low tide, and the Israelites took advantage of it to cross an arm of the sea that could only be rounded by a long journey. The Egyptians attempted to follow them, but by now the tide was coming in, and as the wind had veered round it came in rapidly, so that soon the chariots of the Egyptians were held in the wet sand, unable to go forward or to return. This is an entirely credible account, and it finds once more in natural events the delivering hand of God. The other account is very different. It pictures an avenue of dry ground between walls of water. That would be a suspension of the laws of nature. Nor would it be caused by a strong east wind. Nor is it credible that the Egyptians, with such clear evidence of the supernatural powers that were helping the Israelites, would have dreamt of entering between those walls. A supernatural avenue of safety appearing for their foes

would scarcely have invited their entry. Hence, once more, our rejection of the heightened marvel is not just unreasoned scepticism.

In the case of the walls of Jericho, we have not the same material to examine the question. Modern defenders of the accuracy of the Old Testament records, such as Sir Charles Marston, suppose that an earthquake happened just at that time and effected the overthrow of the walls. That is to say, they suppose that it was once more by means of natural events that God came to the help of His people. If an earthquake did happen, however, it is strange that there is no direct mention of it in the Bible, since the Hebrews so frequently saw the hand of God in storms and earthquakes. But we have seen in the two preceding cases that an event could be transformed in the course of tradition, and we cannot be certain, therefore, that the same thing has not happened here, even though we have only the developed form of the tradition. That Israel did effect a speedy and complete conquest of Jericho is certain. Archaeology has now established that a part of the wall was overthrown and the city burned. But how the wall was overthrown we have no means of knowing. We can scarcely connect the blowing of the trumpets causally with the collapse of the wall, and there is nothing in the Scripture narrative to suggest that we should.

These incidents raise the question, how far we are justified in finding the hand of God in history. I have made it quite plain that I do find the hand of God there. The Old Testament regards God as a God of history, controlling the destinies of the nations, and setting bounds to the arrogance of men. He delivers His own people from Egypt, and He punishes them when they forsake Him. He raises up other nations to be the instruments in His hand for their punishment, nations which are invincible so long as they are the agents of

His will, but which are powerless when they go beyond His purpose. He raises up Cyrus to overthrow the Babylonian empire and to open the way to the return from the Exile. All of this is a reading of history merely from the point of view of Israel, and it is therefore not the whole of the truth. Nevertheless, there is a substantial truth in it, and it seems to me that unless we accept it, we shall merely banish God from His world, and fall into a barren scepticism that can find no meaning in the Bible, and ultimately little in any religious experience. I do not mean, of course, that the simple and sole explanation of the rise of Assyria or of Persia was that God wanted them for His purpose relative to Israel. But I do mean that the guiding hand of God was over all history, and that all unconsciously they were fulfilling His purpose.

But does not this mean that we are making the nations into the puppets of the Almighty, and saddling God with the real responsibility for all that happens? Not at all. It is a fundamental Biblical doctrine that God is able to bring good out of evil, that He is able to bend evil to conform to His purpose, that He is able to make the very wrath of men to praise Him. Evil is evil, and of itself can produce nothing but evil. Yet God is able to overrule it and make it serve His purpose. Of itself it is the antithesis of His purpose, yet He can integrate its issue in His purpose. Let me take a New Testament illustration. Judas Iscariot betrayed our Lord, Who was then tried and crucified. It is a fundamental Christian doctrine that the Cross of Christ is the spring of enduring hope for the world, and the source of divine power for the re-creation of human lives. But Judas has not been canonized, and we do not bless the memory of those who crucified our Lord. They followed the evil purpose of their hearts, and for that purpose their memory is dishonoured. God did not compel them to cherish it, and

He was not responsible for it. But in His greatness He was able from that evil purpose, and from the dire sin of the Crucifixion, to bring living hope to men.

In the same way the nations are each responsible for the policies they pursue, and we have not to suppose that God ordains, or approves, all they do. Far otherwise, indeed. Much that they do is the antithesis of His will. Yet somehow He uses it to further His will. It is surely a much more wonderful view of the power of God which finds Him steadily fulfilling His purpose by the very means of the free activities of men than it would be to suppose that all men were mere automata under His control. And similarly, it is a far more wonderful view of His power to find His miraculous hand in turning natural events to the service of His will than to suppose that from time to time He was reduced to the suspension of the laws of nature in order to fulfil His purpose.

There is another class of miracle in the Old Testament, however, to which we must turn. This is the mere marvel. And here I will take examples from the Elijah and Elisha stories, where they are particularly plentiful. These are not miracles in the sense in which I have defined miracle, indeed, and many of them are rather examples of magic. They are not divine acts in response to human need, but wonders wrought by the prophet by the aid of a technique. A man is felling a tree, and his axe-head flies off into the water. Elisha throws a stick into the water, and the metal axe-head imitates the stick and floats to the surface. This is magic, the control of events by a technique. Or again, King Joash comes to visit Elisha on his death-bed, and the prophet bids him shoot an arrow, the prophet's hands being on his hands as he shoots. And as the arrow flies from the string the prophet cries: "An arrow of victory over Syria" (2 Kings xiii. 17). Then he bids the king strike the floor with his arrows. The king, who evidently has little heart for

this business, lightly taps the ground three times. And angrily the prophet rebukes him. Now he shall have but three victories, whereas had he smitten the ground hard and often he should have had many. Elijah smites the water with his mantle, and the waters divide. Later Elisha is able to do the same thing with the same magic mantle. All of these, and others in the Elijah and Elisha stories, are in a very different category from the miracles we have examined before. These are not God's acts in response to man's need, but examples of sheer magic. For the essence of magic is its belief in man's power to initiate the marvel. It may explain the marvel as wrought by divine agency, but it believes that by the employment of the right technique that divine agency may be set in motion, and that the magician's will and act can control God. We need have no hesitation in regarding these as legendary stories that sprang up speedily around the great names of Elijah and Elisha. And when we recognize that the accounts of these prophets have been embellished with these marvels, we can have no certainty in the case of other marvels recorded in their sagas. Just because the source through which they come to us is of doubtful value in this respect, doubt attaches to the miraculous element in all cases.

What, then, of the miracle on Mount Carmel? This is of a different character from the others. For here it was not a miracle to display the prophet's skill, but a divine act of response to his appeal, and his sublime venture of faith. There is no reason to doubt that Elijah did figure in a great religious crisis, or that he checked the syncretistic movement. Kennett accounted for the story by supposing that what Elijah poured over his altar was not water but naphtha, and that it was ignited by means of a metal mirror that concentrated the sun's rays. Others have suggested that the fire was kindled by lightning, though in that case the altar itself might

have been expected to be shattered. I find it difficult to believe that Elijah resorted to a mere trick, and I can only suppose that in some way that we cannot recover, by the use of forces that were really natural—though they may not have seemed so to Elijah and the people—Elijah was signally vindicated.

Yet another class of miracle is to be found in the Daniel stories. The many historical errors found in the first half of the book of Daniel sufficiently indicate that we are not dealing here with history, but with legends used for a didactic purpose. Our Lord used parables for didactic purposes, such, for instance, as the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. We do not ask whether that is an exact record of fact, and as little should we ask whether the stories of Daniel represent historical facts.

It will be seen, then, that we can lay down no universal canons. We can neither say that all the Old Testament miracles are to be accepted, nor that all are to be rejected. We can only recognize that the miracles reported are of very different kinds, and in narratives of very varied historical value. Each must be examined for itself, in the light of its own character, in the light of the source in which it stands, in the light of its relation to other accounts which stand beside it, and in the light of the character of God. It is difficult to believe that God's real character was different in ancient days from His character to-day, and it does not appear to belong to His character to perform wonders merely to impress men and to compel faith. Faith in God must ever be an achievement and a venture.

In all this the miracles of the Gospels have been left out of account. How shall we view these? Do they belong to the category of the credible, or are they to be viewed with suspicion or scepticism? The question is by no means simple, and I can offer no simple answer.

That there was a tendency in early days to ascribe miraculous deeds to Jesus is clear from the Apocryphal Gospels. Yet before we conclude that in our Gospels we see the beginnings of that process, we should observe that the Church distinguished clearly between the Apocryphal Gospels and those admitted to the Canon, and rejected the former from the Scriptures. We should also observe that it was with good reason that the distinction was drawn, and that the restraint and dignity of the miracle stories in the Canonical Gospels, compared with those in the Apocryphal Gospels, should induce the utmost caution in supposing that the former are mere invention.

In our day a great many things are done, which an earlier generation would have regarded as miraculous. These are mainly in the mechanical and scientific field, however. If one could have stepped into the mediaeval world with a gramophone or a radio set, he would have caused greater wonder than these marvels cause us. Had he associated them with religion they would have been classed as miracles, but had he not so associated them, he would have been found guilty of the black arts and would have been put to death. In this field miracle has ceased to be miraculous with us, and though succeeding ages may see yet more wonderful achievements they would excite little wonder in us. We have learned to see in such things the achievements of man, open equally to all men, and achieved through his understanding of the world around him.

In the world of personality we have not made corresponding strides. Yet in that world even more startling discoveries may await us, and things which would seem to us to be as marvellous as modern mechanical and scientific achievements would have seemed to the mediaeval mind may be really no more marvellous than such things seem to us. It was in the world of personality

and spirit that the uniqueness of Jesus lay, and His transcendence there may be the sufficient explanation of many of the wonderful things recorded of Him. Especially is this true of His miracles of healing, which comprise the great majority of the miracles ascribed to Him. These are examples of the power of personality over personality, of spirit over body, and are not really incredible. They are beyond our power because we have not attained His heights of personality, but not necessarily beyond our potentiality.

This is to preserve a place for Christ's miracles of healing by removing them from the category of miracle in the sense of the supernatural. It is not to remove them from the category of miracle within the terms of our simple definition, however. The greatest discoveries that await us in the world of personality are the discoveries of the possibilities of the life that is linked with the power of God, the capacities of the personality that is enriched by the indwelling presence of the spirit of God; and the greatest achievements that are open to us are the achievements of God through us. The uniqueness of Jesus lay precisely there, in His oneness of spirit with God and in His being the perfect vehicle of God's will. In His activity God was active, initiating succour for needy sufferers through the powers of personality and spirit just as truly as He initiated succour for Israel by making the winds His messengers and the storms the instruments of His will.

There are, however, a few miracles ascribed to Jesus, which provide a much greater difficulty than the miracles of healing. There are the cases of restoration of the dead to life, and the so-called Nature miracles. It is possible that these are accretions, the representation in dramatic form of simple incidents, or the transformation of parables. In modern times much ingenuity has been devoted to explanations along these lines. It is equally possible

that there are secrets of life and death, and of the elements around us, which are hidden from us, but which Jesus penetrated. If we believe that God can initiate events in the world which He has made, and if we believe that God was uniquely in Christ, we can scarcely deny the possibility that God in Christ wrought that which is marvellous in our eyes. It is not necessary to dishonour God by supposing that there was really any suspension or reversal of the laws of nature, though there might seem to be. When a piece of steel leaps up to join a magnet the law of gravity might seem to be suspended, but we are aware that this is not really so, but that the attraction which we represent by the word "gravity" is overcome by a greater attraction, which equally belongs to the world of nature. It may be possible for God, as well as for man, to employ one natural power, whether in the physical or the spiritual world, to overcome another. But to suppose that, in order to achieve His will, God was reduced to the necessity of "breaking the rules" from time to time, would be less honouring to His wisdom and power than to suppose that His works were the agents, and not the embarrassments, of His purpose.

I must now return to my main theme, and observe that when we have decided whether we will accept the account of this miracle as true, or whether we will reject that as untrustworthy, we have not touched the question of the religious use of the stories. There is nothing essentially religious in believing that Elijah made an axe-head swim; on the other hand, there is nothing essentially religious in disbelieving it. The ultimate use of the Bible for the purpose for which it was written and preserved remains still to be attained. That can only be attained when we penetrate to the enduring principles the stories enshrine, and find in them a Word of God unto our souls.

Let me illustrate here by some stories I have not yet mentioned. Take the story of Elijah's being fed by the ravens, or the story of the widow's cruse. Are these exact accounts of fact, or legendary exaggerations? I have said that we are bound to be cautious of the marvellous in the Elijah stories, where so much of the miraculous is mere magic, and of doubtful historical value. But merely to dismiss these stories as of doubtful historical value is to miss their religious value. They enshrine an utterly true message. They say that he who lives for God may count on God; that she who forgets herself in ministering to God's servants is not forgotten of God. That is true. Whatever the worth of the form of the story, this message is reliable. For it can be illustrated by countless stories that are indubitably true.

Many years ago, when I was in charge of a church, I pleaded on one occasion for more liberal support for foreign missions. On the following Sunday an old lady in my church, of over eighty years of age, slipped an envelope into my hands containing an extra gift of seven shillings and sixpence for missions. She lived in an almshouse, and I knew she could not have much to spare; and she already gave generously to missions. I asked her to take it back, assuring her that God would be satisfied that it was in her heart to give it, as He was satisfied that it was in Abraham's heart to sacrifice Isaac. With quiet dignity she reminded me that she was not offering the money to me, that my appeal had brought a call to her heart she could not resist, and that I had no right to refuse her gift. A week or two later I received a cheque for five pounds from a lady for whom I had done a service, with the request that I would use it for my work as I pleased. I decided that the first pound should go to my almshouse friend. She was a woman of good family, and very proud, and I had never before ventured to offer her such small sums from the Church

Poor Fund as were available, for I knew she would be hurt. But I hoped I could be more successful with a pound. I went round to see her, and as I was leaving I asked if she would do me the service of allowing me to leave with her a small gift, and told her of its source. Immediately she burst into tears, and told me that at the moment when I had knocked at her door she was actually on her knees, praying that God would somehow send her something to meet her need. She had no food in the house, and for three days would receive no more money. Not a hint of this had she breathed to me during my visit. And now she found that while the prayer was on her lips, the answer was at the door. I left with a trembling heart, realizing that when I had responded to the impulse of my heart I had been but the agent of God's ministry to His servant. I left, too, with a deeper sense of the truth of the message of these Elijah stories: that they who live for God, who in self-forgetting service yield their all to Him, may count on Him.

It is unnecessary to say anything here about the use of the prophetic books of the Old Testament. For it has been sufficiently said above that beyond any historical understanding of the prophets, in the light of their own time and conditions, there are timeless principles embodied in their message, and that we may apprehend those principles and translate them into the terms of our day and our conditions. It has been said that their message is fundamentally a message of God, and that they viewed every aspect of the life of their time in the light of their vision of God. In this, too, there is a profound religious message for us. To us has been given a larger vision of God than was given to any one of them, since we have entered into the inheritance, not alone of their understanding of God, but of the fuller understanding expressed in the New Testament. And to us there is committed the task of seeking to make all

the life of our day the embodiment of those principles which belong to God Himself. He who sees the vision of God will ever find in that vision a call, to which the only worthy response is "Here am I, send me". Moreover, the records of the Israelite prophets should continually remind us how God enters the lives of ordinary men, who are ready to be the bearers of His message; how He speaks to them through their experience, turning their sorrows and their pains into the channel of enrichment and illumination. And they should teach us to look on our experience with open eyes, that we may learn the things that God is ever seeking to say to us.

Nor should the religious value of such a book as Daniel be missed. There are many who give diligent study to this book on the mistaken assumption that it is the cryptogram of history, and others who, in revolt against such an attitude, neglect it altogether. These two attitudes alike miss its deep religious value. For the author of the book of Daniel, while exercising his ministry through a medium quite different from that of the prophets, was no unworthy successor of theirs. The first part of his book consists of traditional tales, and not accurate history; and the second part rests on the mistaken hope that in his own day the divine intervention in history, with the sweeping away of all earthly empires, and the establishment of the enduring empire of the saints of the Most High, was about to take place. But we have sufficiently insisted that the Word of God can be found even amidst mistakes and unfulfilled hopes. And it can be found in rich measure in this book. There is a profound and enduring religious message in the author's confidence that every power that rears itself against God shall be shattered, and through all that he writes breathes the faith that the way of wisdom for man lies in utter loyalty to God, though it bring him to the burning fiery furnace or the lions' den.

As an example, we may take the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. This can be studied critically for the indications that it is no contemporary account of things that happened in the days of Nebuchadrezzar, and the curious absence of Daniel from this story may be explained by its completely independent origin; while indications that the story was written in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes, and that the image to which it really referred was that set up in the Temple by Antiochus, may be noted. But there is nothing religious in this study. Its religious value begins to appear when we remember that it is a story of three men who could not be deflected from their loyalty to their God by any threats or cruel atrocities. When the king scornfully asks them who is the god who could deliver them out of his hands, and out of his burning fiery furnace, with supreme confidence they reply: "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve, thy gods" (Dan. iii. 17 f.). Assured that God is able to deliver them, confident that He will, they rise to the yet nobler height of the resolve to be faithful to Him, though He should fail them and disappoint their trust. But if this is only a story and not history, if this is but a tale written down in the Maccabaean days, is it not robbed of all value for us? Is the parable of the Good Samaritan robbed of all value, because it is a story? Have men asked: "Why should I be inspired by a mere tale to serve my neighbour in his distress?" The fully historical service of a Florence Nightingale has inspired many. But has not the Good Samaritan inspired vastly more deeds of unselfish service? Is not a story often more true than history? For while history may be the record of that which happened once, a story may be the record of that which has happened often, which

is constantly and typically true. The story of Shadrach Meshach and Abednego is the story of three men who had confidence that God could and would deliver them, and who were delivered. In the Maccabaean days, when the story circulated, many were displaying a like confidence, and were not delivered. They were thrown into the fierce flames of persecution, and lost their lives. In effect they too were saying: "Our God is able . . . and He will . . . But if not." They were displaying this magnificent spirit of loyalty to God, a loyalty that was content with nothing in return from the hand of God, save only the inner elation that loyalty itself brought. The recognition that the Bible is a religious book, and its use as such, comes when we read that story not as a dull bit of history, or as a spirited story even, but when we feel the inner kindling of heart at that loyalty, and are challenged by it to rise to a like spirit of loyalty, turning aside from Him to no idol, but giving Him the undivided obedience of our hearts.

When we turn to the New Testament, we may equally study it with great diligence and learning, yet without religious profit, or we may let all our study minister to our growth in the spirit. We may give our exclusive attention to Form Criticism and minute analysis, or to the historical and cultural background of the New Testament, or to the Theology of the Gospels or of the Pauline Epistles, and be nothing bettered for all our study. On the other hand, all our study of these things may be born of our deep love for the New Testament, and combined with our penetration of its spirit and message. We may, for instance, read the Gospels to see how Jesus was a real man amongst men; we may try to re-capture the atmosphere amidst which He lived, see the light in His eye as He uttered some striking word, or the light that came to the eye of some burdened soul that He helped. If this is merely a detached exercise of

historical imagination, it will be devoid of religious worth. On the other hand, we may rather see Him, not alone as one who lived as a man amongst men, but as One Who lived as a Man with God. God to Him was supremely real, always one of His company, and always the dominant one. In any situation He could breathe a word to Him, and hear His word in response; every circumstance of life was charged with some message from the Father to Him. Our reading of the Gospels may foster in us that attitude to God and to life, the sense that He is with us, speaking to us in all the warp and woof of experience, sharing our experience and equipping us for it. We may let our study be accompanied with meditation—meditation on the truth that He taught, that it may possess our heart, and not our mind alone; meditation on His life and spirit, that its charm may steal into our life, and His spirit appear in us; meditation on His death, that its power may take hold of us and re-create us; meditation on His purposes, that they may become the purposes that inspire our lives, transmuting all our trivial ambitions by linking them to His glorious purposes for the world.

There is much that I have not said. But I have said enough to make it clear that I value the fullest and frankest study of the Bible, and find in such study no menace to the spirit. And I trust I have also made it clear that a merely intellectual understanding is inadequate. To know all about the Bible, and yet to miss its soul, is as sorry a performance as to study music, yet without real appreciation of its beauty. The Bible is the vehicle of truth and teaching, of summons and challenge, and unless we not only understand these things in the light of the conditions out of which they sprang, but also in the light of our own day and our own life and circumstances, re-interpreting in terms of our own experiences the abiding principles which the Bible sets

forth, it were better that we did not handle it. A merely negative Biblical criticism, that is only a polemic against the positions of yesterday, is insufficient and barren. We should rather aim to be constructive, both intellectually and spiritually, bringing to the Bible minds that are keen and active, spirits that are humble and teachable, and souls that are alive to the grace and glory of God.

CHAPTER VI

THE GOD OF THE BIBLE

THAT God is a God of revelation does not need further demonstration. The Bible is the record of that revelation in Israel. This is not to deny that there had been other revelation to other races, or that other religions embody some understanding of the grace and glory of God, and of His will, learned through the experience of their founders and leaders. In Israel that revelation had been effected in many ways. Rabbi Akiba is reported to have said: "Beloved is man in that he was created in the image of God: it is greater love that it was made known to him that he was created in the image of God, as it is written: For in the image of God made he man (Gen. ix. 6)." Some of the commentators on this passage have cavilled at the statement, and have suggested that grace is greater than the knowledge of grace. But grace unknown is incomplete, and the knowledge of grace implies the fact of grace, and is therefore greater than the grace alone, without that knowledge.

Not a few modern writers emphasize the otherness of God and man. This is in accordance with the teaching of the Bible, which nowhere obscures that difference, or forgets the gulf that separates God from man. But truth is rarely a circle, with a single centre. It is more often an ellipse, with a tension between two foci. And the Bible declares the kinship of God and man as firmly as it declares their otherness. Man was created in the image of God; he is a child of God, potentially in his creation and actually in Christ, in Whom we are made

"the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 16 f.). That God's image in man is marred does not alter the fact that man was made in that image, or that even in his marred state there is some kinship between him and God. Nor can we understand the statement that man was made in God's image in physical terms. For God is a spirit, as both Testaments teach. It can only be understood to mean that man was created a spiritual being, capable of fellowship with God, capable of revealing in himself the qualities which belong to God's character.

But God's revelation of Himself in man in creation was followed by His revelation of Himself more largely in the experience and ministry of a long stream of men and women, including especially the prophets. These realized something of the potentialities of their nature, enjoyed a measure of fellowship with God, perceived some of the qualities of His being, entered into a measure of the divine grace, and were the instruments of His revelation of Himself to men. Yet their revelation was all incomplete, and needed the revelation of God in Christ to carry it to its climax. "God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath in these last days spoken unto us in His Son" (Heb. i. 1 f.). He embodied the final revelation of God not in His word alone, but in Himself. For He was the final Word of God. He therefore took up into Himself and into His teaching all that was true of God in the earlier revelation, and there are few aspects of the heart of God seen in Christ which have not their counterpart and preparation in the Old Testament. It is sometimes suggested that He made no real contribution to our knowledge of God, because all the elements of that knowledge are found elsewhere. As well might one hold that there is no originality in Milton's

Paradise Lost, because all of its words can be found in the Dictionary, and most of its ideas in other literature. It is in the synthesis of the elements, and in their synthesis in Himself, that Jesus is uniquely the revelation of God.

What, then, is the character of this God? We may leave aside the cold abstractions of omniscience and omnipotence and omnipresence. This is not because they do not figure in the Biblical revelation, or are of trivial significance. They are everywhere assumed. It is because it is of greater moment to ask what limits His character imposes on the exercise of His powers than what absence of external limit exists. His abiding presence with us might conceivably be filled with hostile purpose towards us, and His power might be arbitrarily employed to toy with us and to torture us; His knowledge of us might be associated with His concealment of Himself, and be the source of our undoing and not of our enrichment. The God Who is revealed in the Bible, and supremely in Christ, is wholly other than this. That He cannot be exhausted in all our thought of Him is axiomatic, and all that we can hope to do is to note some of those qualities of God which stand out in the revelation. The teaching of Jesus was not systematic or exhaustive, and in Himself Jesus revealed God in the concrete wholeness of a living personality, and not in the analytic fragmentariness of a series of attributes. If, then, we consider some of the attributes of God, we must avoid the folly of thinking that they are really separable from one another, or that He is just the amalgam of these qualities. Each of these qualities of God is only what it is in association with the others, and all our efforts to understand Him should rather be thought of as glimpses of the one undivided heart of God through some of the many windows through which we may behold Him.

The God of the Bible is a holy God. This epithet is

applied to Him frequently. "Who is able to stand before the Lord, this holy God?" cried the men of Beth-shemesh (1 Sam. vi. 20). "Ye cannot serve the Lord (and other gods as well)", said Joshua to the people, "for He is a holy God and a jealous God" (Josh. xxiv. 19). In that section of the book of Leviticus which is known as the Code of Holiness, we find frequent emphasis on the holiness of God, and "Ye shall be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. xix. 2) is repeated almost as a refrain. Psalmists, too, hymned His holiness. "There is none holy as the Lord" (1 Sam. ii. 2). "Exalt ye the Lord our God, . . . for the Lord our God is holy" (Ps. xcix. 9).

It is common to observe that the concept of holiness, like so much else, underwent development in Israel. Its earliest connotation seems to have had no relation to moral quality, but to separateness from common life. A thing was holy when it was separated from common use, and set aside for the deity; a person was holy when he was debarred from mixing with ordinary people, save under controlled conditions; God was holy because He was separated from man. But if this was the source of the idea in Israel, it was not its goal. It came to have an ethical content, and to stand for separateness from all that was evil and ignoble and shameful. When Isaiah saw the Lord in the Temple high and lifted up, and the seraphim sang "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. vi. 3), he showed by his response that to him holiness meant separateness from sin. "Woe is me! for I am undone!" he cried, "for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell among a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"; and to this cry the answer was the touch of his mouth with a live coal from the altar, and the assurance, "Lo! this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged". It was sin

that was an offence to the holiness of God, sin that could not live in His presence.

The holiness of God, then, is His moral sublimity, His purity, His righteousness, His freedom from mere arbitrariness. And this holiness makes demands upon men. He who made man in His own image would have men holy as He is holy: "Ye shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy." His holiness is a rebuke to all unholiness, as Isaiah perceived, and all that is not holy is a denial of Him.

All of this is as true to the teaching of the New Testament as of the Old. Jesus addresses God as "Holy Father" (John xvii. 11), and the corollary of that holiness in the demand for holiness in us is frequently underlined. "Like as He which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living" (1 Pet. i. 15); "That we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love" (Eph. i. 4); "To present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before Him" (Col. i. 22); "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God? . . . For the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are" (1 Cor. iii. 16 f.); "That we may be partakers of His holiness" (Heb. xii. 10). It is equally true to the revelation of God given in Christ. If He was not to belie the revelation already given, it was necessary for Him to manifest holiness in Himself, and not merely in His teaching about God. That He did so is testified by His followers. "Ye denied the Holy and Righteous One", says Peter, "and asked for a murderer" (Acts iii. 14). It is equally testified by the effect He had on men. "Woe is me! for I am undone! for I am a man of unclean lips", cried Isaiah when his eyes beheld the King; and when the woman that was a sinner stood beside Jesus, the consciousness of her sin broke her heart in repentance (Luke vii. 36 ff.). The scornful looks and bitter thoughts of the Pharisees were less able to rebuke

her than the gentleness of Him Who suffered her to touch His feet, yet from Whose purity her soul shrank in the consciousness of its shame. His holiness did not consist in the negative grace of sinlessness alone. The great aim of the Pharisees was sinlessness—to guard the little circle of their lives from any intrusion of evil. That is not what the holiness of God is like. He is not ever obsessed with the fear lest He should do something wrong. Nor was Jesus. His holiness consisted in the positive force of goodness ever radiating from Him. Not cold correctness, but a warm, sympathetic grace of character marked Him; He left a trail of joy behind Him, wherever He went, and made it easier for all who were sensitive to the divine influence to believe in God and to believe in goodness. And holiness in us is not any self-conscious rectitude of character, but a spirit which combines goodness and grace, which reaches out in self-forgetting service, which communicates itself to others. Its source is not in us, indeed, but in Him whose holiness is our summons to it. It was communicated to Isaiah by the touch with the live coal from the altar as he stood in the divine presence; to the woman that was a sinner it was communicated by the even richer touch of the personality of Jesus on her spirit. From both alike it required complete consecration to a newness of life.

The God of the Bible is a loving God. This is true of the Old Testament as well as the New. I have heard sermons which have contrasted the God of the New Testament as a loving God with the God of the Old Testament as a severe God. They have displayed understanding neither of the Old Testament nor of the meaning of love. It is in the New Testament, indeed, that we read "God is love" (1 John iv. 8, 16), "God so loved the world" (John iii. 16), "God commendeth His love toward us" (Rom. v. 8), and many another verse which emphasizes the thought that the greatness of God

is matched with His graciousness, His majesty with His mercy, His loftiness with His lovingkindness. But in the Old Testament we read: "It was not because you were more numerous than other peoples that the Lord set His heart on you and chose you . . . but because the Lord loved you" (Deut. vii. 7 f.); "With an everlasting love have I loved thee: therefore have I drawn thee with lovingkindness" (Jer. xxxi. 3); "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (Hos. xi. 1); "The lovingkindness of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him" (Ps. ciii. 17), and many another verse where the rich word so often translated by "lovingkindness" but with no adequate equivalent in our tongue, is used of God's attitude to men. And if "Father" is our Lord's characteristic term for God, and the name by which He teaches us to address Him, in the Old Testament too we read: "Thou, O Lord, art our father: our redeemer from everlasting is thy name" (Isa. lxiii. 16); "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him" (Ps. ciii. 13); "And I said, Ye shall call me My Father, and shall not turn away from following me" (Jer. iii. 19). It is true that in the Old Testament God's love is thought of as limited to Israel, whereas in the New Testament it is thought of as embracing all mankind, and He is seen to yearn over all who know Him not with as deep a yearning as Old Testament writers saw Him to yearn over the wayward of Israel. Yet even here the New Testament thought is not without Old Testament basis. For it has been already said that there were voices in Israel in Old Testament times that declared that since God was One, He was for all men, and that Israel alone was an insufficient inheritance for Him. It was in Christ and His followers that this element of universality in the love of God was emphasized and made a vital element in the thought of God, and a

vitalizing element in its challenge. But it is unnecessary to forget that this was but the fructifying of the seed of Old Testament thought.

It should not be forgotten, either, that the connotation of the word "Father" to the hearers of Jesus was not quite what it means to so many to-day. It implied authority as well as affection, and the love of God is not just weak indifference to the conduct of man. It lays obligations, sacred and exacting, upon man. Love calls for love; and if God loves us, then is His love the most moving call for our answering love. Fatherhood implies sonship; and if we are the children of God, then should we so live that our Father is honoured in our lives, so live that men may see our Father's likeness in His children. What He is, we are called to be. "We are the children of God", says Paul, "and if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 16 f.). That we are privileged to inherit the treasures of God's heart should fill us with eager desire to enter upon our inheritance by the humble loyalty of our hearts.

Nor should we neglect to observe that the revelation that love is of the essence of God's heart is given in all its fullness in Christ Himself. He Who in Himself revealed God to us was Himself love. He not merely taught, as in the incomparable parables of Luke xv, that God is love; He Himself manifested a love that knew no limits. "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10); "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John xv. 13 f.); "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). He showed His love not alone in His restless seeking to lead men to the Father. He showed it in his yearning pity for Jerusalem,

which coldly rejected Him: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings, and ye would not!" (Luke xiii. 34); "Oh that thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong to thy peace" (Luke xix. 42). He showed it in His prayer for those who nailed Him to the Cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). He showed it above all in His endurance of the Cross.

He made plain, also, the corollaries of the love he taught and exemplified. It calls for our answering love, and for our similar love. He expressed those corollaries in words which He culled from the Old Testament, but He filled them with a richer content, and one which plainly surprised His hearers (Luke x. 25 ff.). "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind", He said in the words of Deut. vi. 5, and "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself", in the words of Lev. xix. 18. And when He explained what He meant by neighbour, He interpreted it to mean all whom we can help, however little claim they might seem to have on us. We must love with a love as all-embracing as God's own love, just because we are His children, called to be like Him. We must love as God loves, without stint or limit. Our answering love for Him will lift us to share His love for men, that we may become the channels of His grace.

The God of the Bible is a suffering God. To some, I know, this is heresy, and it cannot be established as a Biblical doctrine by the citation of texts. Yet it seems to be implied. Surely there is anguish in God's heart behind the reproach: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. As I called them, so they went from me" (Hos. xi. 1 f., following

the reading of the Septuagint), and even more in the cry: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? . . . Mine heart is turned within me, my compassions are kindled together" (Hos. xi. 8). And if the view that Hosea learned in his own experience what the love of God is like is correct, then it was through the intense agony of his own heart at the faithlessness of her he loved that he gained his understanding. And that must have proclaimed to him that God suffers as well as that God loves; yea, indeed, that God suffers because He loves.

Nor is Hosea alone in the Old Testament. The infinite pathos of Jeremiah's word: "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jer. ii. 13) can only represent the heart of God if there is grief in that heart. And there can be no grief without pain.

But deeper than anything that can be based on such texts is the fundamental character of love itself. If God is really love, and if the Bible rightly teaches that men have requited the love He has lavished on them by faithless desertion, then He must have suffered. For love alone can endure the deepest suffering, and to reject love is to wound the lover. This consideration may be reinforced by the recognition that Christ suffered the deepest agony. If, then, Christ in Himself revealed God, He revealed Him as a God Who suffers. God was in Christ, not merely in His life, but in His death, revealing Himself supremely there in the sufferings of our Lord. I do not, of course, mean that God endured the physical suffering of the Cross. But the physical agony was not the deepest agony that Christ suffered there. It was the agony of love rejected, love that so profoundly loved those who rejected and crucified Him. The Cross is the most significant window of all history, through

which we can look into the heart of God, and it shows us a God Who suffers in all human sin.

And again there comes a twofold appeal to us—an appeal to abandon the sin that causes Him such agony, and an appeal to enter into His suffering that we may share it. We who are called to be the children of God are called to be like Him, and the call to suffering is one aspect of this call. Paul says we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. viii. 17). He also says: "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. iii. 10); while in 1 Pet. iv. 13 we read: "Insomuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, rejoice." Here the thought was doubtless of the physical suffering of persecution for the sake of Christ. Many have been called to enter into that fellowship of suffering, and in every age the disciples of Him Who was rejected of men must be ready to face rejection. But whether we endure that pain or not, we can share the burden of human sin, and enter into the agony that sin causes the heart of God. When we enter into the depths of His yearning love for men, and see the full tragedy of human sin, as well as its exceeding sinfulness, we cannot contemplate it with unmoved heart, but enter in some measure into the pain of His heart, and strive together with Him to serve and to save those He so profoundly loves.

The God of the Bible is a redeeming God. In the Exodus He rescued the people He had chosen from the Egyptian bondage, and thus revealed His character in a way that Israel could never forget. In all their national afflictions they looked to Him for salvation from the hand of their national adversaries, and when they found a deliverer, it was ever He Who raised him up, and to Him that their thanks were given. And He was thought

of as Israel's next-of-kin, taking upon Himself the duties of protecting, delivering and vindicating His people. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, is the Lord's oracle, and thy redeemer—thy next-of-kin—is the Holy One of Israel" (Isa. xli. 14); "Fear not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by my name, thou art mine" (Isa. xliii. 1). Nor was He merely the national deliverer. In all their afflictions, whether arising from human adversaries and oppressors, or whether arising from sickness and misfortune, the Psalmists cried unto God for their individual deliverance. "Deliver me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, out of the hand of the unrighteous and cruel man" (Ps. lxxi. 4); "O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man" (Ps. xliii. 1); "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles" (Ps. xxxiv. 6).

But Israel came to realize that the gravest and most cruel oppression is the oppression of sin, and that a man's worst foe is within himself. And for deliverance from that enemy men looked to the same redeeming God. "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. . . . Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God, thou God of my salvation" (Ps. li. 2, 14); "As for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away" (Ps. lxv. 3); "Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of thy name; and deliver us, and purge away our sins, for thy name's sake" (Ps. lxxix. 9).

In the New Testament the thought of God's redemption is concentrated on this inner, spiritual redemption, this deliverance of the personality from the grip of sin. On the first page of the New Testament we read: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. i. 21), and Jesus Himself taught His disciples to pray: "Deliver us from evil" (Matt. vi. 13). God is still a redeeming God, and when He reveals

Himself to men in the Person of Jesus, it is in a redeeming personality that He appears. To the Church Christ was their redeemer, not because He was other than God, but because God was in Him, reconciling the world unto Himself (2 Cor. v. 19). It was in His ministry of redemption that He revealed God, and His ministry of redemption was achieved through His suffering. It was because He loved that He suffered, and because He suffered that He saves. "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim. i. 15); "In Whom we have our redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Eph. i. 7); "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. iii. 24); "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13); "Our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity" (Tit. ii. 14); "Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, . . . but with precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ" (1 Pet. i. 18 f.). The Cross of Christ is conceived of, not alone as the revelation of God and the supreme summons of His grace to man, but as the abiding spring of redeeming power.

And again there comes to us a twofold call, a call to experience in our hearts the re-creation that God in Christ achieves, and the call to share in His redeeming work. "We are God's fellow-workers" said Paul (1 Cor. iii. 9); and again: "All things are of God, Who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. . . . Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. . . . We then, as workers together with Him,

beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. v. 18 ff.). This does not mean, of course, that our service has any redeeming power in itself. It means that we, who are called to be the sons of God, are called to enter into the inheritance of the divine purpose, and so to receive His power into our hearts that we become the channels whereby that power reaches others. We are saved, not for ourselves alone, but that we may become the instruments of salvation.

The God of the Bible is a self-communicating God. He does not merely do something for us, but in us. And by this I mean that He not alone re-creates our whole personality, but that He inhabits the tabernacle of our hearts. In an earlier chapter it has been observed that the Old Testament recognizes God's willingness to put His spirit in man, and to make him the instrument of His purpose. "The spirit of the Lord clothed itself with Gideon" (Judges vi. 34); "And the spirit of God rushed upon Saul" (1 Sam. xi. 6); "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit in him" (Isa. xlii. 1); "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek" (Isa. lxi. 1); "I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes" (Ezek. xxxvi. 27); "Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, Whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit" (Isa. lvii. 15).

The New Testament everywhere teaches that God's spirit so perfectly possessed Jesus that in all that He was and all that He did God is manifest. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor. . . . This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke iv. 18, 21); "I and the Father are one" (John x. 30); "I am in the Father, and the Father in me; the words that I say unto you I speak

not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth His works" (John xiv. 10); "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John i. 14); "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19). And when we are re-created in Christ unto newness of life, the mark of that newness is just in that the Spirit of God possesses our hearts and is the source and spring of all our life.

For this indwelling presence of God's spirit, the New Testament has a variety of expressions. Sometimes it speaks of God dwelling in us, sometimes of Christ, sometimes of the Spirit of God, sometimes of the Spirit of Christ, and sometimes of the Holy Spirit; but through all the variety of terminology the same rich experience is meant. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in Him, and he in God" (1 John iv. 15); "If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin" (Rom. viii. 10); "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20); "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John xv. 4); "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21); "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Rom. viii. 9); "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16); "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14); "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9); "It is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mark xiii. 11); "made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Heb. vi. 4).

It is in the light of this that we gain a fuller understanding of the Christian conception of salvation. It is not merely salvation from something, but salvation to something; salvation from sin with all its devastating effects in our character and personality, and salvation

to the life that is hid with Christ in God (Col. iii. 3). God comes into our life to share all our experience, and to bear its burden with us and in us. He comes to give us His strength for every task and for every trial, so that we can face life undaunted and unafraid. He comes to set us great and high tasks, but to give us limitless resources for their fulfilment. Moreover, He stoops to share our experience that He may lift us to share His life. He unfolds to us His thought, His purpose, His love, and our heart glows with the same thought, and purpose and love. It becomes, not something external that we admire, or even submit ourselves to, but the living spring of our life. All this He gives to us, because He gives to us Himself.

From this it is clear that this mystical union of the believer with God is not directed to a mysticism that has no contact with any other reality than God. It is fundamentally practical, equipping us with strength and purpose for the hard world of reality in which we move. It lays upon us sacred obligations. For He Who lives in us, seeks men through us, and reaches out to them through our lives. The heart that knows the joy of this experience communicates its joy to others. For, as Augustine observed, "One loving soul sets another on fire".

The God of the Bible is a reigning God. He is concerned not only for individuals, but for society and for the world. Men are not merely individuals, who have their own life to live and are answerable to God for it. They are also parts one of another, involved in one another's life in countless ways, owing a duty to their fellows that is only second to their duty to God. Jesus spoke much of the Kingdom of God, and the phrase has its roots in the Old Testament. The apocalyptists looked forward to the establishment of God's kingdom on earth. The author of the book of Daniel believed that when

the four earthly empires had run their course, the God of Heaven would set up a kingdom that should never be destroyed (Dan. ii. 44); the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, should be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, through whom the rule of God should be exercised (Dan. vii. 27). It was to be a kingdom on earth; but it was to be the Kingdom of God, in which the will of God would perfectly prevail.

The Gospels do not represent Christ as concerned with the overthrow of earthly empires, or with the establishment of any political kingdom amongst men. "My kingdom is not of this world" He said to Pilate (John xviii. 36), and the word is borne out by all His activity and teaching. He sought to establish spiritual principles, to communicate the life of God to men, to lift men to find the spring of all their life in Him. Hence it is sometimes supposed that the Kingdom He came to found is the Church, the community of those who have received Him into their hearts, and have found in Him newness of life.

One of the urgent needs of our day is for a new doctrine of the Church, a revitalizing of the corporate life of the Christian community not alone in worship, but in witness and responsibility. For not only are we as individuals called to be the temple of God, but the Church as a corporate body is the "body of Christ" (1 Cor. xii. 27). "We, who are many," says Paul, "are one body in Christ, and severally members one of another" (Rom. xii. 5). The entire community of the redeemed owes a loyalty to God that can only be expressed in united service. In times of national emergency every citizen who is worthy of the name is eager to bear some share of the nation's burden, and to stand in with his fellows in the great tasks that fall to be done. He who has looked on the heart of God in Jesus Christ, and seen how deeply human

sin wounds that heart, and how overwhelming is the love wherewith it reaches out to men, will feel a similar eagerness to share the tasks of the Church, and to stand in with the redeemed community in its vast and pressing responsibilities.

Let it not be thought, however, that the Kingdom of God is to be identified with the Church, and that the sole duty of the people of God is to give to God all the love and spiritual devotion of their hearts, and to extend the bounds of the Church. There is a divine will for the world, and the corporate life of the community, as distinct from the Church, needs to be brought under the divine rule. The prophets rightly demanded social righteousness in every sphere of life, not so much because it is man's due, as because it is God's will. The apocalyptists rightly looked for an earthly state in which God's will shall be everywhere done, though they wrongly thought it could be achieved by a catastrophic sweeping away of kingdoms. It is rather to be achieved, as Jesus taught in the parable of the leaven, by the transmuting of the spirit of men. It will not be imposed on men by divine authority, but achieved by men who submit themselves to the divine will.

Our Lord taught us to pray: "Thy Kingdom come; Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 10). It is clearly implied that there is a will of God for men, in their corporate, as well as in their individual, life. There is no side of our life for which He has no message. All the social and economic and international relations of our world are within the range of His purpose. The Kingdom of God will only come in all its glory when all men comprise the Church, finding the spring of their life in Him, and when His will prevails in every aspect of private and public life. And that means that they who are His must address themselves to the double task, the task of spreading His Church and so adding

to the citizens of His kingdom, and the task of applying His spirit to all our modern problems, that His will may be learned and achieved.

It has been earlier said that the hand of God may be found in history, and that He is able to make the wrath of men to praise Him. All who proudly vaunt themselves against Him will be overthrown, and they who trust in Him may have quiet hearts. But God does not establish His will amongst men, save through His own. The Assyrians might be the instruments of His wrath, and the harsh purposes of their cruel hearts might be the instrument of His will, yet they could never establish the positive will of God. They could cause the false creations of men to crumble; they could not erect the nobler structure of God's design. It was the prophets who were the revealers of His will, calling men to the willing acceptance of His great purposes. And to the Church, infused with His living Spirit, is to-day committed the task of calling men to the willing acceptance of that will.

Of the relevance of this God of the Bible to our modern world it is unnecessary to say much. We live in a world in which cruelty and selfishness and sin abound, where brutality and falsehood and force are openly hailed as the successful principles of life, and the gentle grace of holiness and self-forgetting service is treated with contempt. And of the ugliness of the world that is being built on these ungodly principles men everywhere are sufficiently aware. Nor is it alien to our need to be reminded in days such as these that God is love, and that therefore all the infinite resources of His power are on the side of the men that He loves, furthering their deepest and most abiding interests, despite all the appearance of the deceptive scene on which we look. That we live in an age of suffering we are acutely conscious, and perhaps no less conscious that our suffering

is the effect of sin. Men have desired peace, but not the things that alone provide the enduring basis of peace. Some have wanted peace, but only so long as it did not interfere with their lethargy and ease; some have wanted peace, but only so long as it brought them the satisfaction of all their ambitious schemes; few have been primarily concerned with the righteousness without which there can be no peace. And to a world that is writhing in agony comes the message of the Bible that in all its suffering God suffers, and that men's sin against themselves is even more sin against Him. Again, in all our yearning for deliverance from the sorrows of our world, we may fittingly be reminded that He Who suffers in our suffering is a redeeming God, Who is able to deliver nations as well as individuals, and Who alone can deliver us from our outer ills when we will let Him redeem us from the sin which is their cause, when we yield to Him our spirit to be purified and recreated by His power. For if we are merely saved from our ills and left with our sin, it will soon breed fresh ills; and if we are purged of our sin and left with empty hearts to our own devices, we shall soon find greater sins pressing in to fill the place of the old, like the unclean spirits pressing in to occupy the garnished chamber (Luke xi. 24 ff.). The heart of our world needs to be indwelt by the Spirit of God, that we may be not alone saved from the horrors we know, but saved to the age that we desire. That age will only come when God's will is done on earth, as it is in heaven, when He reigns supreme in all the life of our world.

We are living in one of the great crises of history, and the Church of God has little sense of the immense part she is called to play in this age. We are not idle spectators of vast forces we cannot control. We are charged with a dynamic spirit which is sorely needed to transform the world, and ambassadors of the God Who is its supreme

need. In an age when men are hourly adventuring their lives for others, performing deeds of incredible heroism, the Church should hear the summons of the hour to a comparable throwing of herself without reserve into her divinely appointed task. When the conflict is over and the destruction ended, everything will depend on the quality of the peace that is established. Our supreme need is for it to be based on the will of God, for men to recognize that there is a will of God in which alone man's true well-being is found, a will of God in which the apparently conflicting interests of men can be harmonized, but which has no place for their pride and boasting and selfish ambition. By calling men humbly to the feet of the God of the Bible in earnest desire to be guided by Him into the knowledge of that will, and in earnest desire to be the instruments of that will, and by unceasing prayer that our foes may share with us the desire for a world in which God's will is done, we may greatly serve our world. Nor will our task be achieved in a moment. For whatever peace may be established, it is improbable that it will perfectly reflect the will of God, for it is unlikely that the nations will be perfectly attuned to His spirit. The task of declaring to men the God of the Bible as the relevant answer to all their need will thus continue to be the urgent, yet glorious, task committed to us.

CHAPTER VII

SIN IN THE THOUGHT OF THE BIBLE

To deal fully with the Biblical doctrine of Sin would require a treatise, and not a single chapter. Hence here again, it is only possible to concentrate attention on a few aspects of what the Bible regards as the fundamental problem of man. Common to both Testaments is the recognition of the universality of sin. "There is no man that sinneth not" (1 Kings viii. 46); "Surely there is not a righteous man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 20); "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Prov. xx. 9); "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John i. 8); "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23); "In many things we all stumble" (James iii. 2).

All of these passages conceive of sin as a phenomenon of individual experience. And such indeed it is. Yet this is but to touch the fringe of the problem. For we are parts one of another, involving others in our activity and its effects, and affected ourselves by the activities of others. Moreover, there is representative sin, and corporate sin. In early Israel man was thought of primarily as a member of a community. His individual act might involve consequences for the community. Thus Achan's sin in preserving for his own use what should have been destroyed as an offering to God brought disaster on the nation (Joshua vii). His sin might lead others into sin. Jeroboam is repeatedly condemned, not alone because he sinned, but because in his sin he

made Israel to sin. The act of a king was especially liable to be visited on a community. Abimelech asks "Wherein have I sinned against thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin?" (Gen. xx. 9). So, too, David's sin in numbering the people brought punishment on the whole nation in the visitation of a plague (2 Sam. xxiv). Here the king was acting as the representative of the community, and therefore his act could be held to involve them. Beyond this, there could be sin which was truly corporate, in that its guilt was corporately shared. The prophets denounced national policies, which often were clearly not merely the policies of the king and court, but policies which had the full support of public opinion. They denounced the social unrighteousness which was rampant in the life of the nation, marring with its iniquity not only the lives of the individuals who sinned, but the entire structure of society. They denounced the desertion of God which was the root of all the evil things they saw, a desertion which they regarded as a national desertion. Similarly the book of Deuteronomy contemplates a national loyalty to God which shall entail all the blessings of national prosperity, or a national apostasy from God, which shall entail unspeakable national miseries and disasters.

Moreover the provisions for dealing with sin by the sacrificial ritual clearly contemplate corporate sin as well as individual sin. This is particularly clear in the case of the ritual of the day of Atonement, when the sins of the community were conceived of as transferred to the goat that was sent away into the wilderness. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, even all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and shall send it away by the hand of a man that is in readiness into the wilderness; and the goat shall bear

all their iniquities unto a solitary land" (Lev. xvi. 21 f.). Moreover, a bullock, together with the other goat, was offered in sacrifice, and the purpose of the sacrifice is declared to be "to make atonement for the children of Israel because of all their sins" (Lev. xvi. 34).

In the New Testament the corporate and representative aspect of sin is less prominent, but is not wholly absent. The crucifixion of Jesus is regarded not merely as the act of certain individuals, but as the act of the Jewish nation. It was not simply a few private individuals who cried "Crucify Him". It was the constituted authorities of the Jews who condemned Him, and handed Him to the Roman authorities for crucifixion. And when Jesus was being led out to be crucified, and many who followed Him were weeping, He turned and said to them: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For behold the days are coming, in which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts that never gave suck. . . . For if they do these things in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke xxiii. 28 ff.). It is not to be supposed that the crucifixion is here causally connected with the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. It is rather implied that the same root of sin which manifested itself in the crucifixion of Jesus would continue to produce a harvest of evil, until it involved the nation in the catastrophe of A.D. 70. The guilt of the crucifixion was shared by the nation, and it would produce fresh guilt, for, as Ben Azzai said in the second century: "The reward of a transgression is another transgression."

A different application of the concept of representative sin is Paul's argument in Rom. v, where it is declared that Adam's sin involved all men in sin, and in the consequences thereof. "For as through the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, even so through the

obedience of one shall many be made righteous" (Rom. v. 19). Here Adam is thought of as the representative of the race that should issue from him, and committing them by his act.

In the letters to the seven churches, which stand in Rev. ii, iii, we find again the clear recognition that sin is not merely an individual matter. In each case judgement is passed on the community for what is regarded as the spiritual condition of the church as a corporate body, and it is made clear that where there is sin in the life of a church, it is the church, and not alone the individuals who belong to it, that will reap the dire consequences.

Again, in the thought of the Bible, all sin is sin against God. This is not to say that man cannot sin against man, but that sin against man is yet more profoundly sin against God. "I have sinned against the Lord your God, and against you," said Pharaoh (Exod. x. 16). "I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight," said the Prodigal Son (Luke xv. 18). When David was rebuked by Nathan for his adultery with Bathsheba, and his scurvy treatment of the loyal Uriah, the king replied: "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Sam. xii. 13). So in Psalm li, which is associated in its heading with this incident, we read: "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight" (Ps. li. 4). That the Psalm headings are not reliable authority for the authorship and circumstances of origin of the Psalms need scarcely be said, so that we cannot conclude from this heading that it is necessarily rightly ascribed. Whether so or not, it is relevant evidence for our present purpose, showing that sin was thought of as primarily and fundamentally sin against God. So, too, when Joseph rejected the approaches of his master's wife, he said: "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9). Similarly Paul says: "And thus, sinning

against the brethren . . . ye sin against Christ" (1 Cor. viii. 12).

So again, the prophets, in all their denunciation of the social evil of their day, were concerned first and foremost for the offence against God which it involved. They were not, as has been already said, interested in the natural rights of man, and to them sin was not the infringement of those rights They were interested in the will of God. Man's rights were his because God willed them, and because he was a child of God. And any denial of those rights was less an offence against the holder of those rights than against their great Giver. "What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic. vi. 8). Justice is justice because God wills it. And God wills it because it is in harmony with His own great and holy character. While all our emphasis on the ethical principles which the prophets proclaimed is right and proper, they would not have accepted the description of themselves as preachers of ethics, or have recognized as possessing their spirit any who divorce the advocacy of their principles from the thought of God.

But if sin is man's offence against God, it is equally his curse of himself, and of all who are involved in his action. "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions," cried Ezekiel, "so iniquity shall not be your ruin" (Ezek. xviii. 30). And this is a frequent thought. "His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violence shall come down upon his own pate" (Ps. vii. 16); "Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate" (Ps. xxxiv. 21); "He that soweth iniquity shall reap calamity" (Prov. xxii. 8); "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. vi. 7). It curses him by bringing forth its harvest of disaster in his own life and experience; it curses him too by the inner deterioration of his own

personality, by the uncleanness of spirit, which the sacrificial ritual was designed to renew. In passages where there is no reference to sacrifice we equally find that it is this side of sin which is prominent. "Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin" (Ps. li. 2); "And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity whereby they have sinned against me" (Jer. xxxiii. 8); "Cleanse thou me from hidden faults" (Ps. xix. 12). Nor is this all the curse he reaps. Beyond this marring of God's image in himself, and defeating of God's purpose for him, he isolates himself from God, and shuts himself out of the divine fellowship. "Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy holy spirit from me" (Ps. li. 11). "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God" (Isa. lix. 2).

It is equally true that the sin of the community entails the curse of the community. That was the certainty that filled the hearts of the prophets. When they saw iniquity around them, they prophesied of the coming disasters. It was not that they sagaciously saw the strength of the empires that lay around them, and saw that Israel was bound to be swallowed up. There was a time when the armies of the proud and vaunting Sennacherib lay before the walls of Jerusalem, and the hearts of king and people failed them, while Isaiah had serene confidence that deliverance would be wrought of God. It came by no human hand, but by the hand of a plague that carried off great numbers of the Assyrian soldiery, and caused the proud aggressor to retire swiftly to his land. "And the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand: and when men arose in the morning, behold, they were all dead. So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed" (Isa. xxxvii. 36). When the prophets prophesied disaster, it was not because their eyes were beyond the borders, and because they believed military

might was arrayed against them and the Lord's hand was shortened, that it could not save, but because they saw the evil within the borders, and were persuaded that it would bring a harvest of evil. "They have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hos. viii. 7).

The classic expression of these principles is to be found in Deuteronomy xxviii, where individual and national blessings are promised to those who do the will of God, and individual and national disasters to those who forget Him. "It shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee" (Deut. xxviii. 15), and fifty-three verses are devoted to the tale of the curses.

Not seldom the disasters that sin entails are represented as brought by God upon men. It is perhaps truer to say that it is ingrained in the very nature of the world that God has made that sin is self-destructive. He who puts his hand in fire is burned, not because God wills that he shall be burned, but because it is of the nature of fire to burn. He who eats poisoned foods is poisoned, not because God thus punishes him, but because it is of the nature of poison to poison. And similarly he who sins reaps trouble, because it is of the nature of sin to bring trouble; and the nation that sins reaps disaster, because it is of the nature of sin to bring it. This is the will of God only in the sense that His works express His will, and this embodies His will in the basic principles of the universe. Jesus reminded His hearers that the man who builds his house upon the rock will find it stands when the storms break upon it and the rains descend; while he who builds his house upon the sand will find it collapse in ruin in the day of testing (Matt. vii. 24 ff.). It is of no use for him to blame the storms, or to argue that rock

and sand ought to provide an equal basis for his building. He must accept nature as it is, and he flouts it at his peril. In precisely the same way there is a moral and spiritual nature of things, which is flouted by man at his peril. They who build their life on the will of God build wisely and well, and their life is equal to every strain of circumstance; but they who build their life on aught but the will of God cannot cry out against Him at the failure of their building. God has created a moral universe, because He is Himself a Moral Being. Had He so enacted that good and evil produced the same effects, it would not have been a moral universe that He created. It is not that He desires the disasters that sin entails. Far from it, indeed. "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord God: and not rather that he should return from his way and live?" (Ezek. xviii. 23); "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked" (Ezek. xxxiii. 11); "The Lord . . . is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. iii. 9). It is of His beneficence that He has so made us and our world. In conformity to His will lies our truest well-being, whether as men or as nations, and when we violate that will, of His grace we reap disaster that we may learn our folly. Nor is He content to let us learn His will by the negative tutor of the collapse of our building when we do not build aright, but by the positive tutor of His revealed will. Nowhere is man so slow to learn as here. He early learned that fire burns, but not yet has he realized that in the will of God is his peace. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," said Jesus, "but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21).

While then, as has been said, the hand of God may be seen in history, and He is not shut out of the world He

has made, His activity in the field of history is in accordance with the fundamental principles of His Being, and in accordance with those fundamental principles on which He has created our world. When disaster falls on the sinning nation, it is not because God has taken some arbitrary decision against it, but because inherent in the very nature of the sin was a blindness that would stumble forward into disaster. The Old Testament can say: "The God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and he carried them away" (1 Chron. v. 26), and "The Lord sent against him bands of the Chaldaeans; . . . Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah" (2 Kings xxiv. 2 f.), and a whole host of similar utterances. It can assign these disasters to the sins of the people as their spring in such words as: "Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had trespassed against the Lord" (2 Chron. xii. 2). But the most superficial reading of the prophets will reveal that they not alone condemned the social and spiritual evils of their day and predicted disasters, but that they equally condemned the alliances and intrigues and revolts that directly provoked the disasters. To the prophets these were not unrelated to the social and spiritual evils they perceived, but were a manifestation of the same utter blindness to the will of God. The people that is insensitive to God's spirit in one aspect of its life will be insensitive in another, and the nation that flouts the will of God in its internal life is certain to flout it also in its external policies.

When Jesus wept over Jerusalem, He cried: "Oh that thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, when thine enemies shall throw up earthworks about thee, and compass thee around, and keep thee in on every side,

and shall dash thee to the ground, and thy children within thee; . . . because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation" (Luke xix. 42 ff.). The coming destruction is not thought of as an arbitrary return for sin, but as the inevitable issue of the same blindness which was already manifest. For sin carries within its own heart the seed of the destruction of the sinner.

This does not mean that all suffering is the direct retribution of sin. Against that view the book of Job is a great protest. Popular theology, as reflected in the thought of the three friends, believed that suffering was the evidence and fruit of sin, and hence that despite all the outer piety of Job's life, there must have been some secret spring of evil to account for his misfortunes. And the same idea still prevailed in New Testament times, as we see from the question: "Rabbi, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?" (John ix. 2), though here the possibility is recognized that one person's suffering may be the fruit of another's sin. While sin was regarded as the sole cause of suffering, and suffering as the proof of sin, the misery of suffering was intensified. For the spring of sympathy was at least partially blocked, and the consciousness of human judgement and the belief that God had withdrawn Himself from him meant that the sufferer was most isolated when he most needed help. The book of Job tells a story of innocent suffering to proclaim that there is such a thing, and that therefore harsh judgement on the sufferer is not necessarily justified, nor is the sufferer necessarily shut off from God. In the case of Job the reader must be given the explanation of the suffering to show that it is really innocent, and in this case we find the sufferer is supremely honoured of God. God has staked Himself upon Job, and in his suffering he is serving and vindicating God. Yet he himself can never know this, and if Job had been allowed to know it, the book would

have been robbed of its meaning, since when we suffer innocently, we may not know the cause. We can only trust that it is to serve some wise purpose of God. We may therefore find in His fellowship, even in the midst of the suffering itself, our peace and our strength. And this is the point that Job reaches when he has the vision of God. He repents not of his trust in God, but of the charges against God that he has made in his ignorance. "I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear," he says, "but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job xlii. 5). In his very suffering he had found God more truly than ever before. All the knowledge of God that he had hitherto obtained, even in the years of his prosperous piety, was to the knowledge that he had gained in his suffering but as the knowledge of report compared with the knowledge of experience. He had not merely vindicated God in his agony; he had found God, more truly and more deeply. So, too, the Apostle Paul. He suffered some physical malady, whose precise nature we do not know, but which caused him intense agony. At times it was almost too intense to be borne, and he cried out to God for deliverance from it. Instead he found deliverance in his pain, and through it was lifted to a new experience of the grace of God in Christ, so that he learned to rejoice in the very suffering against which he had cried. "Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. xii. 8 f.).

Nor can it be supposed that in any age the sin of the sufferer was regarded as the only possible explanation of his suffering. When great and exceptional calamities fell upon him, men turned to this explanation; but often his suffering was the clear consequence of the sin of

another. All the prophetic denunciation of the ruthless oppression of the poor by the rich, of the perversion of justice, and the reduction to slavery of simple peasants shows that the sin of one individual or of one class is thought of as capable of bringing suffering on others. Nor can this be gainsaid. We are parts one of another, and we are involved in the acts of others. And that not merely when those acts are directed against us. Children are necessarily involved in the consequences of their parents' acts. The man who undermines his own health by his indulgence in sin may pass to his yet unborn children the fruits of that sin in a body which is diseased. The man who brings public shame upon himself brings shame too upon those who are most intimately connected with him. The man who by his improvidence or crime reduces himself to poverty brings all the suffering of poverty on his family too. There are some who cry out against the injustice of all this, who fail to realize that this is the working out of the beneficent principles on which the universe is established. They hold the possibility of blessing and the possibility of curse, and we who rejoice to accept the blessing must not complain of the curse. For the blessing far outweighs the curse. Into the inheritance of those who have gone before us, both in the narrow circle of the family and in the wider circle of the community, we have all entered. There are strains of character and of culture, of achievement and of treasure, in that inheritance, and it is an enormous enrichment to us. But it is always possible for one generation to waste part of its heritage, and to pass it on impaired; yet is it equally possible for it to be enlarged. Men who can rejoice that in their very bones is a love of freedom which is born in them from their fathers may also receive from their fathers disease and the taint of evil; men who can rejoice in all the privilege and opportunity which is theirs by virtue of the achievement

of their fathers or of the community to which they belong, who can take pride in the memory of those who have gone before them, may, by the same token, be forced to look back with shame.

Yet again, there is vicarious suffering, the suffering of one whereby another is benefited. Wide is the range of this in our life, and when it comes to us with its demand, we should remember too its gift. We can only here think of the highest form of this principle of vicarious suffering. It is when that suffering is freely and willingly accepted, and when it is the fruit of another's sin. The father who gives his life's savings to pay the debts of his son, and to save from shame and dishonour the son of his love at the expense of his own humble provision for old age is suffering vicariously for his son's sin. And vicarious suffering figures in the Bible, not merely screening by its sacrifice, but saving, cleansing, renewing, lifting the sinner out of his sin in the act of paying its price. "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was laid upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 5); "This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt. xxvi. 28); "Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous that He might bring us to God" (1 Pet. iii. 18).

While then all suffering is not the fruit of sin, much suffering is. For it is the nature of sin to bring suffering. And it brings suffering not alone to the sinner, but to those against whom it is directed, to those whose interests are bound to the sinner's, and, above all, to the heart of God Himself. It is just here that the exceeding sinfulness of sin is revealed, and it is when a man realizes that he cannot sin to himself alone that he begins to perceive the vast and pressing problem that sin involves. No sin is a mere private matter. All sin is social, and all sin is sin against God.

This is not to lighten the sense of responsibility upon the sinner, but greatly to increase it. It does not mean that when individual or national suffering falls upon us, we are lightly to assign its cause to the sins of others, but that we should examine ourselves, to see how far there is in our heart that evil thing whose nature is to produce evil. One man can sin and his children reap the fruits; one generation can sin and the next generation pay the price. That is taught in the Bible and is borne out in experience. And in the days of Jeremiah men comforted themselves with that thought. When disasters were falling upon the state of Judah, they blamed the policies of their fathers, and quoted the proverb: "The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. xxxi. 29). But the whole burden of Jeremiah's ministry was that in the contemporary world of his day sin was dominant, and he repudiated the proverb by saying: "Every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grapes, his teeth shall be set on edge" (Jer. xxxi. 30). Ezekiel too repudiated the same proverb, and taught the individual responsibility of every man for his own life. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. xviii. 4).

It cannot be denied that there is some inner contradiction in these principles. Logically, if every man is responsible for himself, we are not responsible for one another; and if the consequences of sin fall only on the sinner, then he cannot involve others in those consequences. But life is always larger than logic, and, as has been already said, truth is more often found in the ellipse with two foci than in the circle with a single centre. And in the tension between these two principles, logically unresolved but ever bound together in the reality of life, a fuller understanding of truth is found. And this means that when the fruits of sin fall upon us, whether as individuals or as a community, though they

may be largely the fruits of the sins of others, it is less spiritually profitable to cast the blame on them than to set against the suffering all that we have received from others, language, institutions, culture, faith, and to examine ourselves to see how far there is in us that same evil root, which has shared the responsibility for our plight, and which will curse those who follow us as we are cursed.

Not yet have we attempted to define sin. The Biblical terms for it are many and varied. It is sometimes thought of as a missing of the way along the path of life, a failure to reach the true goal of life in a character which becomes a child of God. It is sometimes thought of as an act of rebellion against God, a repudiation of His sovereignty and His law. It is sometimes thought of as the result of some moral twist in our character. It is sometimes thought of as ignorance of the will of God, blindness to His way, or insensitiveness to His spirit. It is all these and more, because it takes a hundred forms. But fundamentally it is disobedience to the will of God, failure to live and to act in accordance with those principles which inhere in His Being. It may be active or passive disobedience, the doing of those things which are alien to His will, or the failure to do the things that He ordains. Yet is it not something that belongs to our acts, but to ourselves. It is revealed in our conduct, but its root is in our character and our personality. It is the antithesis of God's character, and it is therefore the antithesis of what God created us to be. For He made us in His own image.

It follows from this that in our thought of sin we can concentrate on the guilt of sin, or on the need that it reveals. The sinner is guilty of an offence against God, that rightly calls down upon him the wrath of God. The sentimental spirit of our age often chooses to ignore this aspect of sin, and to eliminate the wrath of God from its thought of Him. In so doing it dispenses with

a real element of the Biblical revelation of God. For unless the ruthless oppression of the weak by the strong calls forth the indignation of God there is no meaning in the prophets. Sin is guilt, and guilt calls forth the divine condemnation, and divine penalties, even though those penalties are most often the inexorable working out of the principles that are inherent in the world because inherent in the heart of God.

But emphasis on the guilt of the sinner is quite inadequate to satisfy the Biblical teaching, whether of the Old or the New Testament. There is equally emphasis on the need of the sinner for deliverance from this burden which he has taken upon himself, this disease which is eating at his life, this stain which is disfiguring his character. The Old Testament has more to say on the offence of the sinner against God, and the New more on the divine pity for the sinner in his need. Yet both recognize the sinner's guilt and his need, and both recognize that it is his guilt which constitutes his need, for his need is precisely for deliverance from the guilt. The elaborate ritual of the Old Testament was conceived of as a way of meeting the need, for the purpose of the sin offerings was to get rid of the guilt. How the offerings were thought to effect this lies beyond our subject here, but of the fact that the offering was believed to free him from guilt there can be no doubt. It was a deliverance achieved by the sinner's offering, and while the initiative may be said to have come from God in that He is believed to have prescribed the offering, the immediate initiative in the particular act of deliverance came from the sinner, in that it was he who provided the offering. It has been said that the offering needed to be accompanied by the right spirit, so that it was the organ of submission to God and not an empty form, but that spirit was still something that came from the side of the sinner.

In the New Testament his need is recognized to be so vast that nothing that he himself can do can meet it. His sin that has destroyed the worth of his character has left him with nothing adequate to offer to God. He cannot rid himself of the burden that weighs him down, for that burden is not something extraneous attached to him; it is himself. Hence, if he is to be saved, he is to be saved by God alone. He is saved because the heart of God is not alone offended at the guilt of sin, but also filled with yearning love over the need of the sinner. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16). That this thought has also its roots in the Old Testament has been said in a previous chapter. For the Old Testament recognizes that God is a God of love, and that ultimately He and He alone can cleanse and renew the sinner and minister to his need, so that the offering, which is the organ of the sinner's submission, is also the organ of God's cleansing act. It releases no automatic power, and its ministry is twofold, bearing the sinner's surrender to God and bringing the divine cleansing to him.

It follows from this that salvation from sin is not just letting a man off the consequences of his sin. Or rather, let us say, it is deliverance from the inner consequences. Many of the outer consequences of sin are not avoided. A man who has ruined his bodily health by his indulgence in sin is not immediately given health when he is saved from his sin. Nor will his children be delivered from the effects of his sin in their bodies. A man who has wasted his substance in sin and impoverished himself and his family must still bear the consequences of his sin, even though he rejoice in the experience of salvation. That is the terrible thing about sin. It brings inexorable consequences, that not even the love of God can avert. Some time ago a friend of mine was at a

meeting where a man confessed to having seduced a number of girls before he found salvation, and then added, "But thank God, I've put all that right now". But he had not put it right, and could not. No repentance on his part could undo the evil he had wrought in the lives of others, and in reverence be it said, not even God could undo his evil past, or make void all its consequences.

Salvation is salvation from sin, from the inner deterioration of character. "The reward of a transgression is a transgression" said Ben Azzai. But salvation breaks the chain of that causation, and starts a new chain of holiness, which will yield fair fruits instead of a continued harvest of evil. Some of the effects of the old sins can be nullified, and they will be nullified. But even where their effects remain, there will also be a new spring of worthy life, in harmony with the will of God, bringing forth the fruits of righteousness. But the inner effects of sin, the effects in the sinner's own heart and life, are abolished. He is freed from guilt. This was the object of the Old Testament ritual. This was the effect of redemption in Christ in New Testament thought. "Being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Rom. vi. 18); "Now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (Heb. ix. 26). The sinner is cleansed and restored to purity of spirit. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. li. 7); "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. i. 18); "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John i. 7). The sinner is restored to fellowship with God. "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy on him" (Isa. lv. 7); "We were

reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Rom. v. 10).

It is clear, then, that salvation, whether in the Old Testament thought or the New, involves the complete yielding of the heart and life of the sinner to God to be re-created by Him. If his sin is to be purged, he must find anew the spring of his life in the will of God. The same is true of the community that is to be redeemed from its sins. It must turn anew unto God, that He may reveal to it His will, and it must find in that will its life and its peace.

That all this is relevant to our need to-day can be easily seen. The world is acutely conscious of its distresses on the grand scale of a widespread and devastating war. Men of all nations profess that they did not want war, and the profession is doubtless true; men of all nations look forward eagerly to the day when conflict shall cease. But what few appear to perceive is that war is the fruit of sin, and that peace will be enduring when men hate, not war alone, but sin. That is why, in my judgement, pacifism is not deep enough. It aims to eliminate war by attacking war, instead of by attacking its causes. On the other hand, it is easy to say, as most would say, that this war has been brought upon the world by the aggressive wickedness of godless men, who found in their own proud ambitions the sole rule of life, who identified right with their will. It is more inclusively true to say that it has been brought upon us because men of all nations thought there was something more important than the will of God. Some thought their own ambition to dominate was more important than the will of God; others thought their own safety was more important than the will of God. The sin differed widely in each case, and the measure of guilt was not the same. But all together contributed, each in its measure, to produce the dire result.

When the German Government made its demands on Czecho-slovakia, four statesmen met in Munich and decided the fate of Czecho-slovakia by an agreement that flouted all the principles of justice. The little state that was there dismembered was unrepresented and unheard, while her powerful adversary was not merely heard, but was a member of the court that decided her fate. That we were powerless to thwart the aggressor is doubtless true, but we shared in the responsibility and the guilt of this grim travesty of justice, and congratulated ourselves that we had at least averted war. We slightly varied the specious argument of Caiaphas (John xi. 50), and argued that it was expedient that one small nation should be sacrificed and that the whole world should be spared. That was sin, the sin of trying to build peace on a basis of injustice, the sin of believing that we could have peace while deserting the will of God.

Let it not be for a moment supposed that I am suggesting that there lay the cause of the war. Far from it. I merely find there a vivid illustration of the fact that the will of a righteous God was not thought to be a sufficient basis for the life of nations, and that we supposed there were more pressing claims upon us than His will. Whether at the end of the conflict we shall achieve a real peace will depend on whether we build it on God's will. And in all our life as a nation the vital need is for the will of God to be the foundation of every policy. Anything else is sin. And sin comes back in curse on the sinner. Yet though it is true that in God's will lies our welfare, we should seek it, not that we may be blessed, but because it is God's will, and because it therefore embodies the supreme wisdom.

What has been said is also relevant to some of the problems that trouble men in time of war. There are some who ask why God should permit war. If what

has been said is true, this really resolves itself into the question why God should permit sin, since war is the fruit of sin. And no man who has exercised his own freedom to sin, and whose life does not perfectly reflect the will of God, has any right to ask why God should allow other men to sin. There are others who ask why war should be allowed to bring so much distress on many who clearly bear no share of responsibility for it, such as children. Here again, it has been said that part of the enormity of sin lies just in its power to involve the innocent in suffering, and our real horror should be directed against sin whose character is so evil. Moreover, all who are members of a community inevitably share the fruits of its sin as well as the profits of its achievements; and this means that even children are involved in the perils which sin brings on the community, whether it be primarily the community's own sin or sin against it. It is not just that one child should be killed by a bomb. True. It is the fruit of sin; and sin is not justice. Its nature is alien to the will of God; and its fruits are also alien to His will. It is not just that another child should begin life with a body predisposed to disease. But this again may be the fruit of sin.

What therefore we should hate with all our soul is sin. We should realize that sin is not some pale abstraction of theology, but a grim and pressing problem of practical life. We should know it for the worst foe of man. And if it is to be hated in the life of the nation, or in the life of some other nation, it is equally to be hated in our own individual lives. For in so far as it is in our lives, it is polluting the life of the nation. The poison that is in the finger may spread through all the body; and we who give sin currency in our lives may spread its currency in the state and in the world. And sin reigns in our hearts so long as God's will is not the law of life for us; and God's will is not our law of life

until we live in His fellowship, our heart filled with His spirit. Yet if sin reigns in our hearts, in Christ we may find re-creation. The Christian Gospel therefore ministers to the deepest need of our time, and the great message of the Bible is profoundly relevant to our most urgent problems.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PERSON AND WORK OF CHRIST

More than once in the foregoing chapters it has been said that the perfect revelation of God was given in Christ, and that in Him divine redemption was wrought. He is therefore more than a casual figure in the Bible, or a mere incident in the story it unfolds. He is the crown and consummation of the Bible, and it is therefore desirable to devote some fuller thought to the Biblical view of Christ. Moreover, if the claim persistently made throughout these pages is justified, and the Bible is a Book that is relevant in its message to our modern world, then Christ, as its crown and consummation, should be relevant to our need. While anything more than a brief glimpse at some aspects of the significance of Christ is out of the question here, it would seem desirable to examine some of the many sides of the Biblical teaching about Him, to see how far He may be regarded as relevant to our modern world.

No one can read the Gospels without feeling the charm of Christ, without seeing something of that gracious spirit that marked Him and feeling something of its radiant influence. No one can read the Gospels without recognizing the loftiness of His teaching, and the high demands He made on men. Love for God and love for man was the unfailing spring of the life He lived and the life to which He called men. He exemplified His teaching in Himself, and when He called men to follow Him, as He so often did, it was not merely to make Him their leader, but their example. And it lies deep in the

teaching of the New Testament that He is our example. "I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you" (John xiii. 15); "We all, reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Cor. iii. 18); "Even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. iii. 13); "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked" (1 John ii. 6); "Every one that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure" (1 John iii. 3).

It follows from this that He was a real man, and the modern emphasis on the reality of His manhood is in the fullest harmony with the teaching of the New Testament. His example could have no meaning for us, if He were not truly of our flesh and blood, entering into the cultural inheritance of His race as we enter into ours, learning by patient toil as we must learn, facing temptation as we must face it. "We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. iv. 15).

In Him we see what manhood really is, what God created it to be. He revealed its high possibilities. When it is dominated by lofty ideals, marked by unfailing purity, filled with deep sympathies, directed by high purpose, and above all lived in the unbroken consciousness of God's presence and fellowship, it has a nobility that makes it supremely attractive. When it is infused with a will which is strong to resist all that is evil, and strong to do that which is good, and marked with an overflowing grace, it is worthy beyond all comparison amongst the treasures of earth. It is set before us in the concrete reality of a living personality in Christ.

He revealed the true meaning of experience. It is so easy for us to estimate the worth of a life by the riches it commands, or the power it wields. Judged by such

standards, few could be pronounced worthy, for most have to pass their lives amidst the dull monotony of common tasks, and in humble station. Christ showed, not alone by His teaching, but in Himself, that the outer show counts for little, and that what really matters is the inner character and the richness of the spiritual influence a man exercises. He revealed the dignity of the commonplace, and amidst the commonplace most of us must spend our days. Take the simple story of His birth. Joseph and Mary are journeying from Galilee to Bethlehem for the imperial census. The journey is a long and weary one for Mary, and they arrive late at the little guest-room of Bethlehem, and find it already crowded to its utmost capacity. It was useless to look for chivalry there, for the Lord of chivalry was the unborn Babe she carried. They were therefore compelled to find a shelter in some outhouse or cave where cattle were kept. Around this stable artists have contrived to weave a halo of romance, but there was nothing romantic about it. It was a squalid and miserable place, and few children who have been born into this world can have had a more unceremonious entrance into life than He had. Had the world sought to dishonour Him it could not more effectively have done so. Yet has its squalor not dishonoured Him, and the story of His birth is precious to men, and will remain precious so long as men endure.

His teaching was linked to common experiences, and all His lessons He found in the things that belonged to ordinary life. He saw common things and found them instinct with messages of eternal things, and found God in everything that befell Him. Even sorrow and temptation were filled by Him with dignity and meaning. He entered into the sorrows of others, and transfigured them by sympathy. He bore His own sorrows, which none could enter into. All the misunderstanding and

hatred and rejection which confronted Him caused Him intense sorrow, just because He loved so profoundly those who misunderstood and hated and rejected Him. Yet we do not esteem Him a figure to be pitied, and One whose life were best exchanged for any other's. These things did not make any the less precious the greatest of lives. For what matters is less the experience than the way it is faced, and every experience can yield something of abiding worth when it is rightly faced. Moreover He endured temptation. Not alone in the wilderness, but again and again He faced temptation. For His manhood was real, and temptation is the lot of man. But temptation that is conquered yields strength to him that overcomes, and not alone did He rise from His temptations with greater strength, but because He endured them, His example has more meaning for us.

Theologians have often discussed whether it was possible for Christ to sin. Some, with the thought of His divinity uppermost in their mind, have maintained that He could not sin; others, with the thought of His humanity uppermost in their mind, have maintained that He could sin. It will be argued below that this separation of His manhood and His divinity is completely mistaken. Here I would prefer to say that He could not sin because He attained the ideal manhood. He was not kept from sinning by anything outside Himself. It was just because His character was all of a piece. God is good just because He would be false to Himself if He were not. And Christ is sinless just because He is ever true to Himself. The more any man's character is of a piece, the more consistent it is. A really truthful man cannot lie, not because it is theoretically impossible for him to tell a lie, but because truth is in his soul, and in falsehood he would not be expressing his innermost self. Similarly the theoretical question whether Christ could have sinned is a hollow and vain one. He over-

came sin by the strength of His character, and by the indwelling power of God, just as we must if we would overcome it.

In Christ we see, then, that life must be judged by inner tests, and that what matters is not the outer show and form of our experience, but how much we are gaining from it in the quality of our manhood, and by how much we are giving through it to others. That this is relevant in our modern world is crystal clear. In a day of widespread sorrow and loss, we are learning anew that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Luke xii. 15). And not a few who have begun by crying out against the hard conditions which press upon them, have learned to find in those very conditions that which calls from them a nobility and unselfishness of spirit they had not before manifested. From the crucible of testing they have emerged finer and purer, and have begun to learn something of the great truth which is proclaimed in Christ. In Him we see the full glory of manhood, see the ideal towards which we must strive when we throw aside all our false standards of life.

It is equally fundamental to the teaching of the New Testament that in Him we see God. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv. 9); "We beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John i. 14); "In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9); "The effulgence of His glory and the very image of His Being" (Heb. i. 3). The divinity of Christ is firmly believed to be as real as His humanity, and no desertion of the one to emphasize the other can claim any justified support in the New Testament. And in all the foregoing chapters the Biblical teaching is here accepted whole-heartedly. Enough has been said in an earlier chapter as to the character of His revelation of God. It is therefore unnecessary to add

anything beyond the reaffirmation that we find "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6).

Are we not, then, on the horns of a dilemma? How can we hold in any real sense both His humanity and His divinity? The trouble arises from our thought of divinity as wholly other than humanity, and it has been observed above that this is not in accordance with the teaching of the Bible. God is other than man, yet akin to man. He far transcends man in power and in purity, but nevertheless He made man in His own image, capable of being the vehicle of His spirit. The otherness and the kinship of God yield an unceasing tension in which truth is to be found. And it is just because in Christ we find that tension of otherness and likeness that we can find in Him perfect Man and very God. The Bible insists that He is the Son of God. Yet we are also called to be the sons of God. Christ taught us to call Him "Our Father". And Paul says: "Ye received not the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 15 ff.); and again he calls Christ "the firstborn of many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29).

These passages would seem to imply that the difference between Christ and ourselves is merely a question of degree. He is the Son of God, and we are the sons of God; He is the firstborn of many brethren, but we are then His younger brothers, members with Him of a common family. Yet elsewhere He is called the only-begotten of the Father, and His Sonship is regarded as wholly unique. Not a few to-day would ignore the uniqueness, and stress the idea that the difference between Him and us is but one of degree.

The assumption that a difference of degree is but trifling confuses the whole issue. There are differences of degree which are of the greatest importance. The partial payment of a bill and its complete payment present a difference of degree that few creditors would regard as of no moment. The difference between truth and falsehood may be represented as merely one of degree, to the confusion of moral standards. There are differences of degree which become differences of kind. If we take a section of a cone in a plane at right angles to its axis we shall have a circle, but if the plane move from that angle by never so little, we shall have an ellipse. If we continue to move the plane until it is parallel to the edge of the cone, we shall have a parabola, while if we continue beyond this point we shall have a hyperbola. The difference between all these results is merely a difference of degree of inclination of the plane, yet the properties of all these figures are different. Or looking at two of these figures in another way, we may observe that an ellipse is described around two foci. The farther apart these foci are the less like a circle is the ellipse, but the nearer together the foci are the more is the ellipse like a circle. When the two foci coincide, the ellipse becomes a circle, but only when they coincide.

There is in man what is often described as "that of God", a divine spark, in virtue of which man is the kinsman of God. But this is not the whole of him. There is also that which is not of God, and at his best he has two foci of his life. In Christ these two foci coincide, and His life becomes, not the ellipse but the circle, perfectly centred in God, yet equally centred in Himself, for He and the Father are in perfect harmony.

That we are called to find the spring of our life in God, and that He is willing to put His spirit in our hearts to be the source of our life, has been already said.

Yet in the best of us His spirit is not the sole source of our life, and sin is not entirely eliminated, but remains as the evidence that there is still a second focus of life. Paul could say: "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20); but the same Paul was constrained to confess: "The good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practise" (Rom. vii. 19). Within the unity of his being, there was still a tension, not wholly resolved. And in all the saints of God, however near they may have come to the resolving of this tension, it has yet to some extent remained. In Christ it was resolved. He therefore constitutes the goal of our humanity, our true example, towards which we must ever progress, yet He ever transcends our attainment. Our ellipse may get nearer and nearer to the circle, yet is it ever other than the circle. His Sonship is other than ours, though we are His brethren. In Him we see God and Man, yet not as two who are separate though somehow combined, but as one, not as two natures, or two personalities, or two wills, but in a perfect unity.

A simple illustration of a different kind may serve to clarify our thought. It is possible for a man to refrain from stealing simply because the law says he must not, and if he does he will be sent to prison. He may all the time have in his heart a desire to steal, if only a safe opportunity presented itself, and his not stealing have no moral value at all. On the other hand he may refrain from stealing because he has no desire whatever to steal, because to steal would be to act unworthily of his own character, because it would be contrary to the impulse of his own heart. If he had a splendid chance to steal, and was quite confident that he could never be found out and punished, it would still not even occur to him to steal. For the law of his own heart in this matter is in perfect accord with the law of the land. In

not stealing he is not the slave of the law, but a free man, living out the law of his own heart. There is no tension between the law and his own heart here. It is resolved in a perfect unity. So Christ in all His life obeyed the will of God, not as an external constraint laid upon Him, not as the result of a trial of strength between God's will and His own, or through the brushing aside of His will for God's, but because it was equally His will.

Against such a view the story of the agony in Gethsemane might seem at first sight to provide a sufficient answer. Do we not there see the reluctance of Jesus to go forward under the constraint laid upon Him, His earnest cry against the path that lies before Him, and His plea for another way? And though He is prepared to go forward, is it not in the spirit of brushing aside His will for God's, and His recognition that in the ultimate it must be God's will and not His that prevails? "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). A very slight reflection will show that this passage is to be understood quite otherwise. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 10), He did not inculcate a spirit of passive resignation to the will of God. This is an active eagerness to see God's will done, and he who prays the prayer in sincerity will seek to further its fulfilment, by yielding his own life to be the instrument of God's will. And when Jesus prayed "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt", He does not mean "Thy will be done on me", but "Thy will be done through me". He shrank from the Cross, not because He dreaded the suffering and the shame He would endure, but because He dreaded the climax of human sin that should there be enacted, and what He so earnestly desired was a way of lifting man out of his sin without that greatest of all sins. Yet if there were

no other way, He was ready, not in weak resignation, but in unshrinking consecration, to be the instrument of God's will. His profoundest purpose was that God's will should be done, and done through Him. His eager desire for another way that might spare man his crowning iniquity was as nothing to His yet deeper desire that God's redeeming purpose for man should be achieved through Him. Hence, when the cup did not pass from Him, it was not because His prayer was rejected, but because it was in the drinking of that cup that His prayer to be the instrument of the Father's will was granted. His Cross became the great channel of God's redeeming grace, and the instrument of His redeeming purpose, just because that same grace and purpose so perfectly possessed His heart.

Christ, then, is our great example; yet is He more than our example. In Him we truly see man; in Him we truly see God; and both in the unity of a single person. In Him God stoops to us to lift us unto Himself. As Athanasius expressed it: "He became man, that we might become divine." He became the Son of Man, that we might become the sons of God. He is not merely our Elder Brother. Our sonship is acquired through Him. God created man in His own image, and we are by nature destined for the sonship of God. Yet is that sonship something to be achieved, and yet that cannot be achieved by our own effort. It is achieved through Christ.

This brings us to the consideration of the work of Christ, and the means whereby He proves the mediator of redemption. And the great source and foundation of all His redeeming work was the Cross. It will be well to approach the Cross in a simple and non-technical way, just as we have approached every subject we have so far considered. Nor is it necessary to repeat the warning that we cannot hope to exhaust the significance of

the Cross of Christ within the compass of a few pages. We can only hope to consider a few aspects of that significance.

The theologian too often approaches the interpretation of the Cross speculatively. His business is to achieve a speculative interpretation but not to build speculation on speculation. Too often he starts with the Person of Christ, and then considers what the death of such a Person might be expected to achieve. Often he begins with some New Testament metaphor that is used to illustrate the meaning of the Cross. And especially has the metaphor of the ransom dominated theology. "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark x. 45). Much of the thought that this text has stimulated has been given to the question of the recipient of the ransom, though no metaphor should be pressed in all its details, and in our Lord's use of the metaphor there is nothing to indicate that He was thinking of the recipient. For many centuries the answer of orthodoxy was that Christ bought us out of the hand of the devil. Yet this, on the same basis of the logical pressing of details, involved the thought that He gave Himself to the devil as the price. And honoured theologians argued that the devil found Christ one too many for him, and that after he had released his prey in return for Christ, he found he could not hold Him. Gregory of Nyssa could speak of Jesus as the bait by which God hooked the devil; Ambrose could speak of a pious fraud practised by God on the devil; Peter Lombard could say that Christ extended His Cross to the devil as a mouse-trap, baited with His blood. Other theologians revolted against such a view, and argued that it was to God the ransom was paid, and so in the great drama of redemption they set Jesus over against God, and supposed that Jesus by His death persuaded God to do for us what He would

not otherwise have done. This would seem to be even more objectionable, and certainly more alien to the thought of the Bible.

I prefer to approach the Cross from the side of experience, and to ask what it has wrought in human lives, striving to understand its power by its effect. This is sometimes condemned as a subjective method of approach, but only by a misuse of the term "subjective". Every sort of discussion, whether of this or of any other question, is necessarily subjective, in that it represents the thinking of some mind. Even the propositions of Euclid are subjective in this sense. They represent truths which were first perceived in the mind of a thinking subject. Yet because they represent not the idiosyncrasies of a peculiar mind, but processes which are open to every normal mind, and whose validity can be perceived by other minds, they are more than subjective. In the same way, if I were to argue that my own peculiar experience alone gave the final key to the meaning of the Cross, I should be arguing subjectively; but when I argue that the experience of countless Christian souls in all ages gives that key, it is not rightly called subjective. There is an objectivity of experience as well as of thought, and it is the objectivity of experience that I would seek, not as the substitute for thought, but as the basis for thought.

At first the disciples regarded the death of Jesus as a tragedy, wrecking all their hopes. They had thought that "it was He which should redeem Israel" (Luke xxiv. 21), but it seemed that they were doomed to complete disappointment. This Man of surpassing character and ideals had been foully murdered, and only disgust and despair seemed appropriate moods to be called forth. What hope could there be for a world which treated a Jesus thus? In later ages, not a few have been content to see in the death of Jesus nothing

more than a tragedy, and to find in Him just a martyr who pathetically threw his life away in the preaching of high principles for which the world was not ready. That this is an inadequate view is proved by experience. The first disciples soon found in the Cross the abiding spring of power, power which transformed them, and launched them on the gigantic task of winning the world. Jesus is more than a martyr, just because experience has always found in His Cross a power that no martyr's death has shown. But was not the death of the martyrs saving? And did not Tertullian say in familiar words: "The blood of the martyrs is seed"? And is not this very much what Jesus said of His own death: "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (John xii. 24)? Ought we not then to say that He was but as one of them, and that His death is saving only as theirs was? Again, I reply that experience has always distinguished between His death and that of the martyrs. His death was the inspiration of theirs, and it was for love of Him that they gave their lives so freely. Moreover, the death of the martyrs had saving power only because they pointed men in their death to Him, in Whom alone was salvation to be found. Yet again, the death of Jesus is removed from the death of the martyrs just because in His life He transcended them so far. It is in the setting of that life that the incongruity of His death appears.

Before His Cross men and women of all generations have experienced a power which has regenerated them. The sense of tragedy has been swallowed up in the joy of hope. They have felt themselves to be changed men and women, dead to the old life, charged with a new power. Nor have they merely felt changed. Others have marked the change, and testified to it with no less assurance. This is not the experience of a few individuals

or in a single age. Through sixty generations great numbers have felt that they could with simple sincerity use in relation to Him words which they read in the Old Testament: "He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed" (Isa. liii. 5). They have been able to say: "This I know, that He died and I have found life; He who was so pure died, and I who was so foul am cleansed; He has changed me, and I am dead to my sins; He who deserved not to die died, and I who deserved to die am delivered; my sins no longer stand between me and God. It is unreal to me to discuss whether He paid the price to God or to the devil. I know that my redemption cost Him His life, and that I am free from the law of sin and of death."

To establish the fact of the redeeming power of the Cross, however, is not to understand wherein its power lies. The first Christians found in the Cross the evidence and fruit of God's love. It was first and foremost a revelation of God to them. He who manifested God in all His life, supremely manifested Him in His death. This means that all those interpretations of the Cross which set Christ over against God in the act of redemption are inadequate. He did not buy us out of the hand of God; He did not appease an angry God; He did not die to satisfy some principle of justice which is in God. He died for our sins, and that is not justice, but love. Nor is the love merely His. "*God* commendeth *His own love* toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. v. 8); "*God so loved* the world that He gave His own begotten Son" (John iii. 16); "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself" (2 Cor. v. 19). This is, of course, not to deny that God's justice is found in redemption. He was not sometimes just, and sometimes loving. His character is one and indivisible.

It is therefore true, as one of our hymns puts it, that in the Cross of Christ, "Heaven's love and justice meet". But they meet, not to oppose one another, but to interpenetrate one another. The Cross declares that He who is just is also loving. Had Christ not died we had never known how profoundly God loves. He loves so greatly that He enters into our suffering, and especially into the suffering that human sin entails. Yea, rather, He takes upon Himself its deepest suffering.

The Cross is also the revelation of man—in all his high potentiality, and in all the depth of his need. There we see Christ, the crown of manhood, in all the supreme glory of His greatness, and we know that God created us to be such as He. In the glory of that love we see the supreme example for us. Yet equally in that act we see the depth of human need. It was sin that crucified Him, and there the essential nature of sin is exposed in all its horror. It was not merely the sin of the Pharisees and Sadducees that crucified Him. It was sin, precisely the same sort of sin that reigns in our hearts. Had we been there, we had been numbered with His crucifiers, for our sin and theirs are one. Yea, rather, we were there. For the Cross is to be thought of not alone as an act of history. It is that, indeed. But it is more. It is an act of history which gives an insight into the eternal heart of God, and which is a symbol of the agony that human sin ever causes His heart. When we reject the divine way of life, and welcome sin into our heart, we renew that agony of His heart; we crucify the Son of God afresh (Heb. vi. 6).

It is sometimes said that it is Christ's life, rather than His death, that is redemptive. He revealed God in His life, and unveiled at once the fullness of His love, and the depth of human need through sin. The New Testament insists that redemption is "through His blood"

(Eph. i. 7), and declares that "without shedding of blood there is no remission of sins" (Heb. ix. 22). And rightly. Had Christ not died we had never known how greatly God loved us; had Christ not died, we had never known how sinful is sin. That is why the cup could not pass from Christ. The full horror of the character of sin must be unveiled. It crucified the best Man who ever lived; it cast Him out of the world just because He was the effulgence of the divine glory. For sin and God cannot dwell together.

But the Cross is more than revealing. It is redemptive. It is "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. i. 16). In Christ crucified God takes hold of us and re-creates us. When we see the glory of God's heart unveiled in the Cross, and when we see the essential nature of sin, and realize that that is a symbol of how our sin pains the heart of God, then is our heart broken by that love. We loathe the self that crucifies Him, loathe the self that casts God out of our lives, loathe the self that lives in such devastating isolation from God. The Cross is not the price the devil demanded; it is not the price God demanded. It is the price I demanded. For no lesser price would have won me. Yet it does not win merely by its illumination.

There are some theories of the Cross which resolve its effect into a change wrought on God, altering His attitude toward us. It has been sufficiently said that it seems preferable to find here the revelation of God. There are other theories which resolve its effect into a change wrought in man, and nothing more. That it does work a change in man is undeniable. But that change is not achieved merely by showing man how dire is his need. The power of the Cross is the power of God reaching down to man in Christ to re-fashion him. Nor is that re-fashioning a mere pretence.

The New Testament speaks sometimes of justification:

"Being justified freely by His grace" (Rom. iii. 24); "Being now justified by His blood" (Rom. v. 9); "Being therefore justified by faith" (Rom. v. 1). It is sometimes argued that the word "justified" does not mean "made righteous", but "treated as righteous". The argument is supported by much linguistic learning, but it is not profound enough for the thought of the New Testament. Nor, indeed, for the Old Testament. "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions" (Isa. xliii. 25). It is the sin itself that is taken away, and not that God treats an unrighteous man as though he were righteous. In the previous chapter it has been held that salvation is not merely from the consequences of sin, but from the sin itself. It involves the cleansing and renewing of the personality, the creating of a new self that is just and pure in the sight of God. Happily this does not rest merely on the translation of a single Greek verb. The New Testament speaks not alone of justification, but also of the new birth: "Except a man be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John iii. 3); "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. v. 17). The old self, the self of sin that rejects and crucifies Christ, must perish, that a new self may come into being. And the new self is born of Christ, marked with His purity, finding the spring of its life in His indwelling presence. "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20); "They that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness" (Rom. viii. 8 ff.). This miracle of renewal is the divine miracle of redemption. All the inner consequences of the old sin are taken away; the deterioration of character gives place to a new

strength and soundness; the guilt and the stain of sin are gone.

Yet, as has been said, this divinely wrought change in man is not the entire work of the Cross. In speaking of Old Testament sacrifice it has been said that it achieved nothing merely *ex opere operato*. It needed to be the organ of the submission of the sacrificer if it was to be the organ of the divine cleansing. In the same way the death of Christ is a sacrifice offered unto God, as well as a revelation of God, and before it can become operative for us, it must be the organ of our repentance, submission and faith. When we yield ourselves in unreserved surrender to the Christ Who died for us, we make His sacrifice the organ of our obedience, and it therefore becomes the organ of divine forgiveness and renewal to us. "Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin. . . . But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him; knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more" (Rom. vi. 6 ff.). By the yielding of ourselves to Him, we become identified with Him. The old self dies with Him, that a new self, born of Him, may share His experience of resurrection.

It was not they who crucified Christ who sacrificed Him unto God; it was they who are crucified with Him who so sacrificed Him. The Cross brings only condemnation to them that crucified Him, and so long as we are merely numbered with His crucifiers, it spells condemnation for us. It is only when we yield our hearts in loving obedience to Him, opening them to experience the miracle of divine renewal, that His death becomes our sacrifice to God, and brings pardoning grace to us.

Hence the faith on which the New Testament insists as essential to salvation is not some arbitrary condition fixed by God. It is inevitable and fundamental. We

are not saved by faith, or by repentance, or by anything other than the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Faith is not some intellectual belief about Christ, though it must include an intellectual element. But fundamentally it is the yielding of ourselves to Him to be born anew in Him, the identifying of ourselves with Him so that His death becomes our sacrifice unto God, His obedience our offering of obedience unto God, the sharing of His death so that we may share His glorious resurrection. And repentance belongs essentially to all this, just because we cannot be saved from sin while we cling to it, and because we must loathe that which crucified Him ere the power of His Cross can achieve its victory in us.

In an age when the sinfulness of sin is so manifest as in ours, all this is of vital moment to men. The fruits of sin, whether in individual or in national life, are recognized to be evil, and men's teeth are set on edge. But even if men pass from the hatred of the fruits of sin to the hatred of sin—and that is no step that men lightly and naturally take—mere hatred of sin will bring no salvation. There are many preachers of repentance, repentance of individual and of national sins. Yet repentance alone is no Gospel for mankind. For repentance is not redemptive. It is Christ Who is the world's redeemer. We need to behold in the Cross the gross iniquity of that which so wounds the heart of God, and to realize that in all our sin God suffers more deeply than we ourselves do. In the private sins that stain our lives He suffers, and in the sins that mar the life of nations, and the wars which are the outcome of those sins, God suffers, and suffers because He loves, suffers because He so desires to re-fashion all our life in fairness and grace. He can do this when we will bring our life to the Cross of Christ, there to abandon the old and to find in Him the spring of the new. It is not enough for

us merely to hate the old, and decide to abandon it and try again. We must let the old be nailed to His Cross, that the new may there take its rise, with His spirit and His will at its heart. And this is just as true of the life of the community as of the individual. His will must lie at the heart of all our national life if it is to be worthy.

It is easier to win individual hearts to this self-abandonment to Christ; and certainly it is vital to do so. For no community will be delivered from sin while the people who make up its life are living in sin. The redeemed community will consist of redeemed individuals, and the work of individual redemption is therefore essential. Yet a community of redeemed individuals is not necessarily a redeemed community. It is common knowledge that the standards of a community may be below those of the individuals who comprise it. Certainly they can be far below the standards of the best elements of the community. For the policy of the community may be directed by men who are unworthy even of the community. Parallel, therefore, with the work of leading individuals to the Cross of Christ should go the work of testifying that only when the nations find the spring of their life in Christ, and genuinely realize that in the will of God is their peace, can they find release from their ills. Ourselves dedicated to Christ we should seek to lead the nations to corporate repentance and faith in Christ, that His Cross may become the organ of our obedience, and the organ of God's redemption. To such an enterprise the Church is called by the events of our time. And urgent is the need. It is not that the more parochial work of the Church should be neglected. "This ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone" (Matt. xxiii. 23). It is that beside the more parochial work this great oecumenical task should be unitedly undertaken by the whole Church, in the

living faith that Christ is the Lord of all life, and that He is the only relevant answer to our need, and that He can inspire the life of nations as well as of men. It is not enough for individual Christians to believe this most profoundly. It is for the Church corporately to seek to bring the corporate life of the world to the re-creating spring of the Crucified Redeemer.

INDEX

(*a*) GENERAL

(*b*) SCRIPTURE REFERENCES