The Missionary Genius of the Bible

THE MISSIONARY GENIUS OF THE BIBLE

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Preface

THIS small volume owes its existence to a Missionary Conference held in January 1924 at High Leigh, Hoddesdon. At that Conference I was asked to read a paper on "The Missionary Message of the Gospels," and out of that paper the book has grown. In connection with its missionary educational campaign the Church Missionary Society has published some Study Outlines, and to the section in these which deals with the missionary teaching of the Bible I am indebted for some suggestions. There is, surely, need for a text-book of this kind, because, strange though it may appear, it is a fact that very little has been written, in England at any rate, upon the missionary message of the Bible. Dr. R. F. Horton published in 1904 a small work, *The Bible a Missionary Book*, but that is now out of print. Is there any other book upon the subject? The Missionary Genius of the Bible is a theme so vast that several volumes are needed, if

it is to be treated adequately. But the outlines of a large subject can be sketched in small compass. Such a sketch is all that is here attempted. Little or nothing has been said about the missionary genius of the Bible as literature, or about the qualities which make it a volume that suffers less than any other book by translation into different languages. Our concern in these pages is with its spiritual message as that is gradually unfolded with increasing richness.

V. F. STORR.

Westminster Abbey,
May 1924.

Contents

Chapter I — *A Changed Outlook*

We are constantly being told to-day, and rightly told, that we must "think in continents." A narrow parochial or insular outlook is of little value; only a world-wide vision can match the world-wide needs of the present age. The world of humanity has become one, and the scale of all movements has in consequence vastly increased. This is true in almost every department of life, social, political, economic, religious. An International Labour Movement, the Reunion of Christendom, the League of Nations, the rapid Westernizing of the East, are but examples of the growing solidarity of mankind and the essential fellowship of its component parts. "And whether one member suffereth, all the members suffer with it"; the truth of St. Paul's teaching about the body has come home to us in painful fashion in these years of slow reconstruction after the Great War. We are realizing our oneness as we never realized it before.

Missionary work reflects the changed outlook of the times; indeed, it is questionable if there is any sphere of human activity in which alterations of method and ideal are more apparent. You have only to compare the missionary literature of to-day with that of twenty years ago to see how entirely the scene has changed. The *largeness* of missionary enterprise is rapidly being borne in upon the minds of thousands, not only of those who have been regular supporters of the cause of missions abroad and now see a new vision, but of an increasing number of people who, for one reason or another, have hitherto taken no interest in the work. It is now being understood that what is at stake is nothing less than the future of civilization, that what we do, or fail to do, in the matter of spreading Christian truth in the next half-century is going to determine the kind of world in which our grandchildren will have to live. New nations are coming to the birth. A new China, India, Africa are being shaped under the impact of fresh forces, in part derived from the West, in part of native origin. Anyone must admit that it will make an immense difference to the entire world whether these rising civilizations are Christian

or non-Christian. The missionary who goes out to-day to a heathen country with the message of the Gospel is doing something far bigger than bringing individual souls to Christ and His truth; he is helping to mould a developing nation and lay the foundations upon which an entire civilization is to be built. Do we sufficiently reflect upon the immense possibilities which are involved in missionary enterprise?

We need not here discuss how this enlarged outlook has affected missionary methods. That it has done so is plain; and it will continue to do so increasingly. It has profoundly modified the educational policy of the missionary; it has changed his view of the relation of Christianity to heathen faiths; it is revolutionizing missionary propaganda at home. With only one point are we concerned—How has it affected our view of the missionary message of the Bible? Missionary work has, of course, always found its main support in the Bible, in the belief, that is, that the Bible contains the record of a divine revelation given to the world, a revelation universal in scope, intended for all men, and therefore to be made available for all men. But there

is unquestionably need for a change in the character of the appeal which is made to the Bible as providing a sanction for missionary work; and this for two reasons.

(*a*) A great cause needs a great backing; and to match the growing sense of the largeness of missionary enterprise must be an enlargement of the appeal which we make to the Bible. It is, for instance, not enough to quote from Scripture a series of proof-texts in support of missions. The proof-text suspended in mid-air is useless. It must be related to its context. It must be shown to stand out from a background which is essentially missionary in colour. We must, in a word, see the revelation in the Bible in its large, bold outlines, in the big sweep of its movement, in its progressive character and unfolding purpose. We have to learn a new method of using the Bible as a missionary book.

(*b*) Our appeal to the Bible must take account of modern scholarship. The labours of generations of scholars who have studied the Bible with reverent care, using ever-improving methods of research, have given us a new view of this marvellous collection of writings. I cannot here attempt to sketch

even an outline of what has been achieved. I can single out only two or three points which we must bear in mind.

1. First, we must learn to think of the Bible as a literature rather than as a single book. It is a library rather than one volume; though there is a wonderful unity in this collection of writings, a unity of purpose and of growth, as the great plan of redemption is made clear through its succession of stages. Being a national literature, it contains writings, not only of varied date, but of unequal value. We do an enormous injustice to the Bible if we treat all its contents as being on the same level. In every other national literature we recognize this diversity of value, and we must recognize it here. A bird's-eye view of the Bible shows us, not a stretch of flat, monotonous ground, but a scene infinitely diversified; plains, valleys, mountains with here and there a soaring peak, rich gardens, plots of soil where only with difficulty the tiny flower can thrive. A list of names in Chronicles and Psalm li.—is God equally revealed in both? Do we for our own spiritual nurture read Leviticus as frequently as we read the Fourth Gospel?

2. Secondly, we have to recognize the

presence in the Bible of a large human element. Whatever Inspiration means, it does not mean that the writers were prevented, either from making mistakes, or from using their human faculties in the ordinary way. Inspiration is not dictation, nor did God's Spirit in giving spiritual illumination to the writers endow them with historical and scientific knowledge beyond that of their contemporaries. Other national literatures contain elements of folk-lore, ancient tradition coming down from a long past, stories of what was "in the beginning" which are not historically true. The Bible contains the same; and, in addition, being an Oriental literature, is peculiarly rich in the elements of parable, fable and allegory.

3. But the more we emphasize the presence of a human element in the Bible, the more does the divine element shine out. How was it that, alone among contemporary nations, the Hebrews reached that conception of God which is the basis of our modern theism? The Bible is the text-book of a religious experience which is unique, an experience so rich and dominating that it provides the moulds into which our own religious experi-

ence falls. Why did this experience come to this people? The only rational answer is that God was in a special way revealing Himself to them. The results of Biblical scholarship have made clear how the Bible stands apart from all other literatures in virtue of its spiritual message, and how, if we are to account for its uniqueness, we must postulate some special inspiration of its writers.

In this matter no compromise is possible; no half-way house affords shelter. The new way of looking at the Bible has to be accepted. I am not saying that some of the conclusions of scholarship may not have to be revised. The pendulum may swing back in a more conservative direction. It is not of results in detail I am speaking. I am merely pleading that we shall accept the general way of looking at the Bible which is known as the way of "higher criticism." I plead, in other words, that we shall not come to the Bible with our minds already made up as to what Inspiration means, and so dictate to God the form which His revelation must take; but shall patiently try to find out, with the help of the scholars, what the Bible has to tell us about itself. In all other departments

we accept the authority of the expert. Why not here?

One striking fact is noticeable. Strong resistance is still being shown to the newer view of the Bible; but there is no sign of any output of literature combating these newer views. Again I am not saying that valuable books are not coming out dealing with special questions, with critical views of the Pentateuch, for example. But that is not the point. The point is, that those opposed to the newer view are not meeting it by argument and publications. They meet it merely by protest, and sometimes by abuse. If the scholars are all wrong in their view of the Bible, if Inspiration is Verbal or Plenary, why are our shelves not full of volumes, massive in their learning, which prove the scholars to be wrong? Why are the teaching posts in our Universities and Theological Colleges not filled by men who are demonstrating to the younger generation the falsity of critical conclusions? There is only one answer. The newer view of the Bible is the true view; and the truth is winning its way, as truth always does, among those who are prepared to think, and to put bias and prejudice aside. In this small volume

the general results of Biblical criticism are adopted. Brought up in the older school, I have, through study of what the scholars have to say, and through inability to relate my knowledge of other subjects to the views of that older school, been compelled to leave it. I did so without any reluctance, because once the newer view of the Bible was clearly understood, such a splendid and alluring prospect unfolded itself. The Bible began to live, as it had never lived before. Revelation took on a new meaning; history became charged with fresh significance. And I found that the spiritual value of the Bible, its appeal to will and heart and conscience, was unaltered. It remained God's message to the soul. The jewel had not perished; it had received a new and more appropriate setting.

Fresh truth, especially in matters of religion, where men are naturally conservative, takes time to win its way. With regard to Biblical criticism the position to-day, as I see it, is this. The minority which thinks and studies has gratefully accepted what scholarship has to offer, and has abandoned the older view of the Bible. Another minority (I believe it to be such) clings

tenaciously to the conservative position. Midway lies a large mass of people who are rather bewildered, and their bewilderment shows itself in their reluctance to give Bible instruction to their children. They have not really studied the Bible in its new light; but they know enough to be aware that instruction on the old lines is "out of date." They either give no religious teaching in the family or hand over such instruction to the schoolmaster or the parish clergyman, who themselves may be teaching the children things which they will have to unlearn later on. The whole position is very unsatisfactory, though it is improving as new syllabuses of religious teaching on modern lines are being drawn up for schools, and as the many inexpensive and simple books on the Bible of to-day gradually circulate.

Meanwhile it is clear that, where there is this uncertainty in the popular mind about the Bible, the missionary message of the book must suffer. You cannot conduct a vigorous missionary campaign if you are in doubt about the nature and message of the writings to which you appeal in defence of your campaign. A man must be sure of his own cause before he can commend it to others.

What is wanted, as has been already said, is a new presentation of the Bible as a whole, a presentation which shall bring out its large, salient characteristics and emphasize the progressive nature of the revelation which it records. As these characteristics are made clear it will be seen how essentially missionary they are; how the doctrine of God in the Bible cannot possibly be the truth for only one race; how Hebrew prophecy at its best was universalistic; how the Old Testament looked forward to the New, and was part of a spiritual movement whose goal is nothing less than what St. Paul called the summing up of all things in Christ (Eph. i.10); how the teaching and work of our Lord had world-wide significance; how a man like St. Paul, Jew though he was and with many Jewish limitations of outlook, was right in seeing in Christianity a religion for all mankind; how the writer of the Fourth Gospel, penetrating deeper into the meaning of the Gospel than any other of the writers of the New Testament, deliberately set forth that Gospel of salvation and truth as the one supreme spiritual dynamic for the whole of humanity, freeing it, as Christ had freed it, from all that was local or temporary, and

linking it to the eternal purpose of God for the world.

This is a theme magnificent enough for any writer. I am not so foolish as to suppose that I can do it justice. But I shall be more than satisfied if I can help some to see how the Bible is more than big enough to meet the enlarged missionary outlook of our day.

Chapter II The O.T. Conception of God

THE doctrine of God must be our starting-point, for the missionary genius of the Bible is derived from its thought of God. And we begin with the conception of God in the Old Testament, not only because it comes first in historical order, but because it is the foundation upon which the New Testament conception of God reposes. One Testament cannot be treated in isolation from the other. Both belong to the same spiritual movement. If the New Testament looks backward to the Old, the Old Testament looks forward to the New.

The key to the whole development of the religion of Israel, and the core of its thought of God, are to be found in the revelation given to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus iii.). Moses, called to the great task of liberating his slave-people, and inspiring them with a sense of nationhood based on religion, asks what name he is to give God, under what character he is

to present God to these Hebrews. The answer comes, "I Am that I Am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you." Now "I am" is perhaps better translated "I will be" or "I will become." What underlies the divine name is the thought of a nature or character of God so rich and comprehensive that it could be only gradually unfolded. It is as if God said, "Trust Me, and you will learn what I will be to you." The name suggests progressive revelation and "contains infinite possibilities of adaptation." [1] In the course of their national history the Hebrews were to discover the nature of God. Here at the opening of their national life, when an unknown future lay before them, they were bidden think of God as the Self-Revealer, who would as time went on disclose His purposes and through a growing experience unfold His character. He would meet their search for Him by entering into fellowship with them. The history of the nation, as interpreted by its religious

[1] Note in McNeile's *Exodus* in the Westminster Commentaries, p. 18. The name Yahweh (= Jehovah) is connected philologically with *Ehjeh*, "I will be," and is derived from the same root: cp. Excursus I, "The Names of God," in Driver's *Genesis*.

teachers, is a commentary on this story of Moses at the bush. Again and again in the Old Testament is reference made to the deliverance from Egypt as proof that God cared for Israel, had a destiny in store for them, and had never ceased to continue that process of Self-disclosure which began when Moses received his commission.[1]

But did God's self-revelation begin with Moses? Was there not a revelation to Abraham and the patriarchs, and did not God enter into covenant relationship with His people much earlier in their history? The problem of the relation of the Mosaic conception of God to the patriarchal conception is raised by a passage in Exodus itself (vi. 2, 3). "And God appeared unto Moses, and said unto him, I am Jehovah: and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah I was not known unto them." Yet if we turn to Genesis in the stories of the patriarchs the name Jehovah is used freely.[2] The solution of this problem is of course found in the presence in the Pentateuch of different documents dis-

[1] Cp. Isa. xi. 16; Jer. xvi. 14; Ezek. xx.; Hos. xi. 1; Amos ii. 10; Micah vi. 4.

[2] *E.g.* Genesis xii. 1, xv. 1, xviii. 1.

tinguished, among other characteristics, by differing names for God. The writer of Exodus vi. 2, 3 was obviously not the same as the writer of Genesis xv. 7 and xxviii. 7, where God is represented as calling Himself by the personal name Jehovah. In discussing the value to be attached to the narratives of the patriarchs we have to remember that they were written hundreds of years after the events which they describe.[1] They cannot be claimed as historical. They represent popular tradition handed down through the centuries, though that tradition gathers round what we may well believe to be a historical nucleus. But the narratives as they confront us in Genesis unquestionably betray the presence of an idealizing process and reflect the outlook of a much later age. Hence we cannot take them at their face value and use them as proof that the patriarchs actually had the conception of God which they picture them as having.

[1] The interval between Abraham and the Exodus is certainly 900 and possibly 1000 years; cp. Driver's *Genesis*, Introd. § 2, The Chronology of Genesis. The narratives as we have them in their present form reveal two sources, one dating probably from 9th and 8th century B.C., the other from the age of Ezekiel and the Exile, though earlier material is incorporated in it.

I do not think that we can safely advance beyond the following positions. First, we must assume that Moses in approaching his people in the name of religion appealed to the God of their fathers. If he had appealed to an entirely unknown God would he have had any chance of success? And it is a remarkable fact that the religious tradition of Israel did not begin with Moses, founder though he was of the nation proper, but began with the patriarchs, who lived probably some thousand years before Moses. Why should this have been, unless tradition had preserved the record of a religious movement which had actually taken place at the earlier date? But what the patriarchal conception of God really was in actual fact, who can say? Secondly, we do well to remember that, though we must apply to the religion of Israel the idea of growth, thus bringing it into line with the general fact of an evolution of religion everywhere, evolution does not necessarily imply uniform development. Retrogression is a fact both in nature and human history. It may be that such a man as Abraham had a more developed conception of God than some of his successors, and that that conception

was lost in subsequent ages. But whatever may have been the patriarchal conception of God, the probability is that it was very primitive; and that Moses in appealing to the God of their fathers gave the Israelites what was for them a new conception of God, richer than anything they had previously grasped, and probably richer than anything the patriarchs had grasped.

This may be called a digression, but it is necessary to make it, for we have to take account of the results of modern scholarship in our use of the Bible. I cannot, however, see that criticism has in any way weakened the appeal which we may legitimately make to the Bible as a missionary book from first page to last. Grant the truth of all that the scholars tell us, grant that the God of the patriarchs was probably some Nature-deity, and that the whole of the theology of Genesis is the theology of a much later age thrown back by later writers into primitive times, the message of Genesis still confronts us. There is its picture of God, revealing Himself, entering into covenant relationship with the patriarchs, unfolding a destiny for the nation, vouchsafing His presence to individuals, seeking to draw men into fellowship with Himself. If this is all unhistorical, if it is

history " written up " in a religious interest centuries later, let us note the fact of the religious interest in which it is written. Why did the historians of Israel give this rich religious interpretation to the traditional events of their remote national past? *Because their own religious experience fell into these moulds.* And it is this experience for which you have to account. Can you account for it, except on the hypothesis that God did progressively reveal Himself to this nation in a unique manner? If in the historical days of Israel their consciousness of God took the form which it took in the prophets, what more natural than that the historians, relying on their own experience of God, and seeing His hand in the story of the nation's life, should say, " This is what God has always been; this is what He was to Abraham. He changes not; our God was the God of our fathers."

Let us bear in mind two principles, when we are studying any process of development. The first is that in a process you must look to the end, and not to the beginning, if you would understand the meaning of the process. The plant explains the seed, rather than the seed the plant. It is because we have seen the baby grow into the man that we realize

the immense possibilities which lie hid in a new-born life. To understand the wonder of Hebrew religion we must study it at the height of its development, in the prophets. There you see to what the earlier stages of the religion were pointing; and you rightly view them as prophetic, as containing germs which would subsequently ripen. Evolution, in a word, as a method of advance involves a qualitative enrichment as the development proceeds. There is more in the end than there was in the beginning. And just because that is so, and because there is continuity between the stages of this evolution, you can never make a cross-section, as it were, of the evolution, isolate one stage, and interpret it by itself. You must interpret it in the light of what it was going to become. "I will be what I will be." One of the notable features of the Old Testament, as we shall see later, is that the religion of Israel always looked forward. "The best is yet to be"; that hope animated the religious leaders of the nation. Each stage of the advance contained the earnest of subsequent advance. And the basis of the whole movement was the belief in a God who was progressively revealing Himself.

The second principle is that worth and

origin have nothing to do with each other. A lowly beginning does not discredit a noble ending. The value of a human person with his spiritual capacities is not one whit less because he began life as a tiny cell composed of chemical substances. Behind the revealed religion of the Hebrews lay an ethnic religion, which they shared with other Semite peoples. Traces of this primitive religion are found in the Old Testament, embedded like fossils in the rocks, witnessing to a remote past in which the ancestors of the Hebrews were dimly feeling after God. And when what we believe to have been a special process of divine education began, the conception of God was still rudimentary and imperfect. Only gradually was that thought of God reached which is found, for example, in Second Isaiah.[1] But this fact does not take away from the worth of the later conception. The argument of Naturalism is that, because Hebrew religion began (if it did so begin) with Nature-worship, or ancestor-worship, or totemism, therefore all the later developments can be discounted as being mere

[1] Chs. xl.–lxvi. are the work of a prophet living towards the close of the Exile. But critics are divided in opinion as to whether a single writer wrote them all.

after-growths of human construction; just as materialism treats consciousness as a strange by-product of molecular forces. But surely the truth lies in the counter-argument. If mind emerged out of matter, then matter must have all the while contained mind, and cannot rightly be interpreted apart from mind. If the ethical monotheism of the prophets grew from a primitive Nature-worship, then we must admit that the Nature-worship was never merely such, but had in it the potentialities of monotheism. For the theist there is no difficulty in the case. He, believing in a God behind the evolution, and refusing to regard the evolution as going on apart from divine control, sees in the increasing richness of the evolution a progressive unfolding of the divine purpose and a growing commentary on the nature of God Himself.

The Old Testament, then, presents God in the character of a Self-Revealer, and does so because the only explanation which the thinkers of the Hebrew nation could give of their remarkable religious experience was that God was giving them a special revelation of Himself. The Old Testament is primarily a record of a religious experience. Save in

some of its later writings it is not much concerned with speculation about God. No Hebrew was an atheist. The writers of this literature transcribe the experience of God which came to them, set it out in its rich variety, and offer as the interpretation of it the word "revelation." Can we find any other word? There is the experience; we have either to explain it or explain it away. It is difficult to regard it as the product of self-deception, for then we have to go on to regard our own religious experience in the same light. The world will never be persuaded that all religion is illusion. One of the deepest interests of humanity is religion, and in all ages men have been searching for God and have believed that He has answered their search.

Now is it not true to say that the ideas of God and of Revelation go hand in hand? What we mean by God is a Being whose nature it is to reveal Himself. You cannot think of God without immediately thinking of Him as making Himself known to men. We speak of Creation, of the universe as owing its origin and continuance to divine volition. But Creation is the manifestation of God. We know Him through His works.

"For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity" (Romans i. 20). And because there are difficulties in thinking of God as beginning to create at a certain time, having previously lived without a universe, philosophy tends to take the position that Creation is an eternal activity, that God has always been expressing Himself through some system of material things, that he has never been without worlds to reflect His glory, and be the instrument of His purpose. God is Spirit, and spirit as we know it in ourselves is essentially creative in the sense that it is its nature to express itself. We make houses, paint pictures, form ourselves into societies, in order to carry out the purposes which we frame, and give embodiment to the instincts and tendencies within us which crave realization.

The idea of evolution comes in here to help us in our attempt to think of God as the Revealer. Science has drawn for us the outlines of a vast process of development which has been going on for millions of years, stage succeeding stage in orderly

sequence. First the inorganic; then, when the earth's crust was ready for life, life appeared in very lowly form, but endowed with the power of progressive development, and branching out into the infinite variety of animal and vegetable existence which we see to-day. In due course man came upon the scene; not the developed being which we know to-day, but rude, uncivilized, closely akin to his animal ancestors, yet with that within him which was to mark him off from the beasts; with moral capacity and intellectual powers and a spiritual nature in virtue of which he could claim kinship with his Maker. Slowly did primitive man grow through thousands of years, till his increasing mastery over Nature enabled him to make more rapid advance, and humanity entered upon the stage of history proper.

As we view this stupendous evolution we see how at each stage God was revealing more of Himself. Life tells us more about God than does lifeless matter. Man tells us more than do the lower animals. It is when the moral development of humanity is reached that we begin to understand more clearly the nature of God. Nature speaks

of the divine power and wisdom, and the beauty of a sunset or autumn woodland witnesses to something spiritual in God; but only from man do we learn that God has a moral purpose in creating and is a God of character. Being purposive creatures ourselves we cannot but read purpose in the evolution, and, true to our principle that the end explains the beginning, we find in the later stages of the evolution the key to the meaning of the whole. We read God's purpose in creation as the calling into being of a kingdom of moral personalities who shall live by the principles of love and goodness and in their fellowship with each other reflect the divine character. We find the clearest expression of God and His purposes in our own higher nature, in our ideals and aspirations after Truth, Beauty and Holiness. "I will be what I will be." The story of evolution is a commentary on those words.

Now evolution, which was once mistakenly thought to be hostile to religion, is surely a powerful aid to those who believe that the Old Testament contains the record of a divine revelation. For if God has been progressively revealing Himself in the age-

long processes of Nature and history, gradually making more clear His spiritual purpose in creation, is it not supremely reasonable to believe that He should yet more clearly reveal Himself through man? Why this intenser revelation was made only to one race we cannot say; any more than we can say why the Greeks had a special genius for sculpture of the human form, or why one area of the world should have a soil more fertile than that of another area. But the hypothesis of a special revelation in matters relating to God and religion made to the Hebrews finds general confirmation in the belief in a gradual self-disclosure of God through ascending degrees in Nature and history, culminating in personality with its spiritual capacities and ethical ideals. If it is the nature of God to reveal Himself, He would surely want man to know as much about Him as he could. And if we grant that there was a special action of God upon the Hebrew race, the form which it took was in line with what we know of God's action elsewhere. The revelation was made, not all at once, but by gradual stages. It grew richer as it proceeded. It was an education suited to the capacity of the recipients.

This, as it seems to me, is the kind of background against which we should present the Old Testament conception of a Self-Revealing God. Such a presentation links the Old Testament with what we know of God's method of operation elsewhere, and does not leave it isolated. It emphasizes the fact that to reveal Himself is part of God's essential nature. It makes prominent the thought of degrees of revelation, of an ascending scale in the divine Self-disclosure. It increases the marvel of the Hebrew Scriptures, because the more we bring them into connection with the general movements of history, the more inexplicable becomes their religious teaching apart from some postulate of special revelation or inspiration. We owe it to the scholars that we are now able to think of the Bible, not as something standing entirely by itself, dropped, as it were, ready-made from the blue of heaven, but as taking its place within the general scheme of the spiritual development of humanity.

To trace, even in outline, the development of the conception of God in the Old Testament would require several chapters. But for our present purpose no such task need be attempted. It will be enough if we remind

ourselves of the nature of the idea of God which the Old Testament finally reached, and then consider its missionary implications.

(*a*) The unity and sole sovereignty of God is the first feature in the conception. This was almost certainly reached gradually, at any rate by the mass of the people. Popular religion was not strictly monotheistic till after the Exile, as the denunciation of the prophets against the worship of other gods proves. And such evidence as the Old Testament affords seems to point to the fact, that in the earlier stages of the nation's life Jehovah was worshipped as a national God, whose existence did not preclude the existence of other gods.[1] But from Jeremiah onwards monotheism is the creed taught by the prophets. In this connection the work of Amos, the earliest of the writing prophets, is of supreme importance. In the revelation made to Moses a philosophy of history is implicit. Amos develops this and teaches that Jehovah is in control of the nations and directs the course of history.

[1] Cp. Judges xi. 23, 24; 1 Sam. xxvi. 19; 2 Kings v. 17, where Naaman's request, in which Elisha acquiesces, implies that Jehovah can be worshipped only in His own territory.

It was probably contact with the vast empires of Assyria and Babylon with their imposing unity which forced the prophets to think more deeply about the unity of Jehovah.[1]

(*b*) The second feature in the conception of God is His ethical character. In primitive religion ritual and ceremonial play the most prominent part. As religious development proceeds, the ethical side of religion comes to the forefront. We can trace in the Old Testament a gradual moralizing of the conception of God, until in the prophets the main emphasis is placed upon the fact that God is essentially a moral Being, who requires morality in His worshippers.[2] It was the great achievement of the prophets that they taught a lofty, ethical monotheism and spiritualized the conception of worship. The Personality of God, so far as we can judge, was never called in question in any age covered by the Old Testament. From the first God is presented as personal; and that Moses had an idea of Him as moral is clear; but there is a progressive emphasis upon His moral character, and upon the

[1] Cp. Davidson's *The Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 101.

[2] Cp. Amos v. 21–24; Isa. i. 10–17; Micah vi. 6–8.

paramount importance of morality in those who worshipped Him.

(*c*) The covenant relationship of God to the nation, with all that it implied of divine care and purpose on the one side, and of human obligation on the other, lies at the foundation of Hebrew religion, but we can trace an expansion of the idea of national relationship to God into that of individual relationship. The sense of the value of the individual grows; in the writings of Jeremiah and Ezekiel we see an emphasis put upon individual responsibility which is not there in earlier times.[1] A growing experience of God, and reflection upon the meaning of that experience, led thoughtful men in Israel to understand more fully what was implied in the very fact of religion itself. Man was called to fellowship with God. God was entering into living relationship with human beings. The individual soul therefore must be of value in God's eyes, and there were unlimited possibilities of developing spiritual fellowship with God. It was because some in Israel explored those avenues of approach to God that we have such a collection of writings as the Psalms. Many, no doubt,

[1] Jer. xxxi. 29, 30; Ezek. xiv.

are primarily national in character, but many are essentially individual, the outpouring of souls in joy, or doubt, or grief, or perplexity. This reflection upon the implications of man's fellowship with God led to the later assurance of immortality. Belief in Sheol or the under-world of departed spirits, where there was bare existence but nothing which could really be called life [1]—an ethnic, not a revealed belief—gradually gave place to a fuller doctrine of survival based upon the conviction that, if God had called man to fellowship with Himself, death could not interrupt that communion.

(*d*) The initiative in the Old Testament lies always with God. It was not because of any special righteousness in Israel that God chose him and revealed Himself to him. It was a divine act of free grace. And no explanation of it is possible. Upon the Hebrew mind broke the wonder of a redeeming activity of the divine love. The thought of God as Redeemer grows clearer as the development proceeds, until it reaches its completest expression in Second Isaiah. Looking back upon the past, Hosea sees the first movement of this love in the release from

[1] Job x. 21, 22; Isa. xxxviii. 18, xiv. 10.

Egyptian captivity: "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (xi. 1). In Second Isaiah we have the tenderness of the redeeming love emphasized: "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old" (lxiii. 9). The thought of God as having a redeeming purpose is more prominent in this prophet than in any other; and it is he who gives us the picture of the Servant who was to redeem his people by suffering for them.[1] But all through the Old Testament the redemptive attributes of God are in evidence. The groundwork is being laid for the fuller revelation in Christianity.

The missionary implications of this conception of God are undeniable. In fundamental constitution all men are alike. All appreciate the distinction between right and wrong. There is an impressive unity of mankind morally regarded. And hence the Hebrew conception of God as an ethical Being had of necessity about it a note of universality. If there was but one God, and He a God of

[1] *E.g.* lii. 13–liii.

moral character and the Maker of men with the capacity for moral growth, He stood in a common moral relationship to all men, of which all men should be made conscious. A self-disclosure of God in the ethical sphere can have nothing local about it. In the same way the unity of God, the more the significance of that truth is understood, implies, not only the unity of mankind, but the need for making all men grasp a truth which lies at the foundation of all human thought. It is the mark of man to acquire knowledge, and the knowledge so acquired shapes his whole life of thought and conduct. All truth has dynamic power, and a fundamental truth such as this cannot be left as the possession of the few. It calls for propagation, for progress depends on it. Redemption, again, loses its meaning if you limit its scope. If God has a redemptive purpose for the world it must include all men. We make havoc of the moral character of God if with one breath we speak of Him as Redeemer, and with the next limit the range of the redemption. His moral attributes of love, justice, impartiality recede into the background, and their place is taken by the non-moral attribute of sheer,

arbitrary power. Finally, God's willingness to enter into fellowship with men, His spiritual initiative, implies that He desires to lift human life to a higher level. Is there any life which cannot be so lifted? God, having made man with the capacity for such fellowship, and having implanted in him religious instincts and aspirations, must want to see these germs grow, and grow in the right direction. Unless the world serves a spiritual purpose it has no purpose that we can discover. If it serves a spiritual purpose, which is being worked out through human instruments, you cannot exclude any race or any individual from the scope of that purpose. That the purpose may be fulfilled all must be told of it.

Chapter III The Doctrine of Man in the Old Testament

BOTH accounts of the creation of man in Genesis emphasize his superiority to the animals, and suggest that he stands toward God in a peculiar relation. In the first account (i.–ii. 4) man is made in the divine image, after the divine likeness, is given authority and dominion over the lower creation, and is bidden exercise that authority. He is created last, on the sixth day; we with our evolutionary outlook describe him as the crown of creation. In the second account (ii. 4 to end) man is created before the animals. His physical frame is made of the dust of the ground, but his life is a gift from God, who "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." When it is said that man became "a living soul" (*néphesh*), the word used implies nothing distinctive of man as contrasted with the animals. "Soul" in Hebrew psychology means the life principle in any organism. But, though the

animals also received life from God, it is not said of them that God "breathed" into them the breath of life. They are "formed" out of the ground (ver. 19). The implication is that man stands in a special relation to God, which the remainder of the narrative plainly teaches.

What is meant by the words "image" and "likeness"? Whatever shade of distinction there is between them is unimportant. They cannot refer to any physical similarity between man and God, but to the fact that man has spiritual endowments which are akin to those in God, and form a peculiar link between him and his Maker. Man possesses self-conscious reason, has a moral nature, can form character, is haunted by ideals of goodness after which he aspires, is capable of the fellowship of love, can hold communion with God. There is in man a spark of the divine. God in creating man has communicated to him something of His own nature. It is important to note that this is said of man generally. The statement is universal in its application to mankind. Adam is not a proper name. It means "man." The LXX wrongly makes Adam a proper name in ii. 16, as the Vulgate

does in ii. 19.[1] All men in the view of the writers of these narratives have something of the divine in them; all stand in a relationship to God which is not shared by the lower animals.

Thus at its very opening the Old Testament lays down the truth, which it progressively expounds throughout its pages, a truth which receives confirmation and enrichment in Christianity. May we not, in the light of our subsequent knowledge and reflection interpret the simple narrative in Genesis, without unduly straining it, as bearing witness to the three following principles? (*a*) A moral purpose is at work in the world. Human life has a moral significance. The command given to man to "subdue" the earth implies responsibility in the exercise of his power[2]; and the command not to eat of the forbidden tree (ii. 17) is meaningless unless man was capable of appreciating ethical distinctions. The picture of God is a picture of a Being with

[1] Cp. Ryle's *Genesis* in Cambridge Bible, note p. 37. Adam = "man" has a feminine form, "adamah" = ground: this gives point to ii. 7, which says man was created "of the dust of the ground" (cp. Driver, *Genesis*, note p. 37).

[2] Cp. Ryle's *Genesis*, note p. 21, in Cambridge Bible.

moral character. The picture of man is drawn with the same colours. The purpose of creation, at any rate one purpose of it, the purpose with which the Bible is chiefly concerned, is the education and discipline of humanity in the meaning of morality. (*b*) But morality finds its natural sublimation in religion. The Bible knows nothing of ethics apart from God. In these early narratives morality takes the form of a divine command—"thou shalt not eat of it." The command is not arbitrary; it reflects the divine nature. A thing is not right because it is God's will. God wills it because it is right. God is a moral Being, and His volitions are the necessary expression of His character. Here in Genesis man is represented as being in a personal relationship to God. With a charming simplicity God is pictured as walking in the garden, talking to man, calling him to judgment. It is a picture of a Father training His child. And the child is conscious of the personal presence of his Father. The narrative does not deal with abstractions, but with family intimacies. Morality is taken up into religion, and religion means the fellowship of man with God. That sets the keynote of

the whole Old Testament. Man is called to fellowship with a Personal God. Religion is the experience of that fellowship. The meaning of life is that through living, personal fellowship with God man shall develop his spiritual capacities and so grow more like God in character. (*c*) Are our ideals mere daydreams, or is there an ultimate reality which corresponds to them? We see visions of perfect Truth, Beauty, Goodness. We hear them calling to us to pursue them. Are we chasing a flying phantom? Surely we are not. God is the Being in whom our ideals are eternally realized. From Him they emanate. We pursue them because He implanted that within us which makes us pursue them. We can see no purpose in the moral struggles of humanity, in its slow climbing from savagery to ethical civilization, unless somewhere there is a Being in whom moral values are conserved, and whose ethical nature the struggles reflect. The Old Testament in its first chapter answers the charge that man throws his own likeness on the sky and calls it God. "You are making God in your own image," runs the criticism. "We are, and we are right in doing so, because God first made us in His

image." We can use only human language about God, for we have no other. But while we recognize to the full that the naïve anthropomorphism of these early narratives needs qualification, and that we cannot think of God as a magnified man, the truth remains that in God there is something really akin to the will, reason, conscience which we know in ourselves. The Creation story in Genesis, taken with the story of the Fall, teaches plainly that morality is not a mere human convention, but an expression of the divine nature; that God looks for character in man because there is character in Himself; in a word, that the ultimate reality behind the visible scene is a Personal Spirit, revealing Himself through all the grades of creation, and most markedly in the human spirit with its capacity for religion and moral human relationships.

After the story of Creation comes the story of the Fall, which in picture fashion enunciates certain truths which lie at the foundation of all the morality and theology of the Old Testament. These truths are as follows. Man possesses freedom; he can

choose between good and evil. If he did not possess this power of selection between ethical alternatives could he be called a moral being? "I ought—I can—I will"; do not the three terms hang together? In the possession of this gift of freedom lies man's probation. His moral nature has to be exercised. Temptation is permitted in order that man by resisting it may develop character. Character is that which a man forms for himself. He is the architect of his own soul. In the last resort responsibility for failure rests with his own will. Now man has misused this gift of freedom. He has not fulfilled God's purpose for him. He has sinned. And all men have sinned. The story of the Fall has universal significance. Sin is represented as an offence against a Personal Being. The child has disobeyed his Father's command; and following on the disobedience come two things. First, a sense of guilt as conscience awakens. The man and his wife hide themselves from the presence of God in the garden (iii. 8). Secondly, the sin is punished by God. The form which the punishment takes is expulsion from the garden. Sin violates and interrupts man's fellowship with God. The

earlier harmony is broken; a note of discord is heard. Henceforth the story of human life is to be one of struggle: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed" (iii. 15). In this struggle the writer sees the meaning of human life.

Two points in this connection call for a word of comment. The narrative in Genesis emphasizes the universal sinfulness of the human race, which is throughout the Old Testament treated as a unity. The story of the Fall is succeeded by the story of Cain's murder, while the story of the Flood is prefaced by the statement, "And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (vi. 5). There is progression in evil. The poison has spread; each individual is sinful. The sinful individual stands out against a sinful background. But the Old Testament offers no explanation of the solidarity of humanity in sin. It does not say that Adam's sin was the cause of the sinfulness of his successors. The theology of the Fall, which has played such a prominent part in Christian teaching

about sin, we owe to St. Paul, not to the Old Testament; and St. Paul in turn derived it from his Rabbinic training.[1] It is very doubtful if there is any subsequent reference to the Fall in the Old Testament.[2] We cannot, says Dr. A. B. Davidson, maintain with certainty that "the Old Testament offers anything beyond just the historical facts that Adam fell from righteousness, and that we observe his descendants universally sinful." [3]

The second point concerns what has been called the *Protevangelium* in iii. 15. The verse describes the conflict between the serpent and the seed of the woman. There is to be unceasing moral warfare between the forces of good and evil. But in the verse itself is no mention of victory, still less of a personal conqueror. Since the conflict is

[1] In Ryle's *Genesis*, Cambridge Bible, there is an admirable note on the Fall, which refers to modern books on the subject. Tennant's *The Fall and Original Sin* should be read by all who wish to understand the difference which evolutionary science and modern Biblical studies have made in our approach to the subject.

[2] Job xxxi.. 33 and Hosea vi. 7 are "doubtful exceptions" (Ryle, *op. cit.*). *Adam* in both these cases should probably be rendered "man," not taken as a proper name.

[3] *The Theology of the Old Testament*, p. 219.

ordained by God, and it must be God's intention that good shall ultimately triumph, and since in the Cross of Christ the struggle reaches its climax and is crowned with victory, we may perhaps legitimately read back a fuller meaning into this verse. But let us be conscious of what we are doing. The New Testament can be found in the Old only in germ and tentative anticipation. We must read the one continuous spiritual movement which both record backwards and forwards, if we are to appreciate its significance. There is the prophecy looking for fulfilment; there is the fulfilment which gives a richer meaning to the prophecy.

The teaching of the Old Testament remains throughout true to this opening picture of a corrupt human nature and a fellowship with God interrupted by the sin of man. The fact of sin meets us on almost every page. The Hebrew writers, being practical rather than speculative, do not give us an elaborate theology of sin, and leave unanswered many questions which later reflection has raised. But they exhibit sin as an operative force in human life, show its results in society and in the individual, and depict it in relation to God and His purposes for mankind.

God's hatred of sin, His reaction against it, His desire to help man overcome it—these are the great themes of the Old Testament. Sin is described with a rich variety of language. If righteousness is conformity to a standard, sin is failure to reach that standard. Or sin is darkness, or uncleanness, or that which is crooked, or deliberate rebellion.[1] The last expression takes us into the heart of the matter. Sin is rebellion against God. "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me" (Isaiah i. 2).[2] Sin is more than a breach of law, or an offence against men; it is disobedience to the will of a Personal God. We have seen how this conception of sin confronts us at the very beginning of the Bible in the story of the Fall. The conception is never changed, but there is a development in the apprehension of what sin so conceived implies. This development proceeds along two lines, both closely related. There is, first, the growing sense of individual responsibility and of the worth of the individual soul.

[1] See article *Sin* in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible*, or Davidson's *The Theology of the Old Testament*, ch. vii.

[2] Cp. 2 Kings xii. 19; Deut. ix. 7; Ezek. ii. 3.

Secondly, there is progressive understanding of the character and purposes of God.

When the Exile broke up the national life of the people, religion of necessity became more individual in character. How could they "sing the Lord's song in a strange land" when there was no Temple and none of the ordered services of worship? Men were forced to think more deeply upon the meaning of religion, and to find compensation for outward loss in the soul's private communion with God. It has been pointed out how Jeremiah reverses the principles which earlier prophets used, and begins, not with the nation as the unit, but with individuals.[1] "I will take you one of a city, and two of a tribe, and I will bring you to Zion" (iii. 14). And when he asks, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" (xiii. 23) he means that an inward regeneration, which God alone can effect, is the first condition of reform. Ezekiel carries still further the doctrine of individual worth and responsibility. "All souls are mine, saith the Lord; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine; the soul that sinneth, it

[1] Davidson, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

shall die. . . . Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every man according to his ways" (xviii. 4, 30).

It is not so easy to trace development in the prophetic conception of God. No prophet, for example, has dealt more profoundly with sin than Hosea (*circ.* 750–734 B.C.), or revealed more poignantly the sorrow at the heart of God over man's sinning. What sin means to the divine love, the yearning of God over men, His longing to forgive and heal, the tragedy of Israel's transgression, are all set out in Hosea's prophecies with a clarity born of God's personal contact upon the writer's soul. And in Isaiah (740–701 B.C.) the transcendence and holiness of God are dominant conceptions, sin being rebellion or haughtiness, or insensibility to the claims upon Israel of "the Holy One of Israel."[1] Sin too is shown in its roots, as a perverted condition of heart and will,[2] and religion as no matter of ceremony or outward observ-

[1] i. 2, ii. 12, vi. 10. Holiness = transcendence in its original significance, and probably carried with it no moral significance; but it acquired such when men began to reflect on the contrast between their own sinful nature and the nature of God.

[2] xxix. 13.

ance, but as the fellowship of the penitent and forgiven soul with God.[1] Yet in Second Isaiah (555–538 B.C.) we are conscious of an advance in the conception of God, which has its reaction upon the idea of sin. The monotheism of this prophet is unmatched elsewhere in the Old Testament. No other prophet has so sure a sense of God's guidance of history, or a greater scorn of idolatry. For him God is absolutely supreme and sovereign. Yet this exalted and lofty God is essentially a Redeemer, loving to dwell with the humble and contrite,[2] seeking to forgive Israel, and hindered in carrying out His purposes of love for the nation only by the nation's sins.[3] And it is in this prophet that we find the picture of the Suffering Servant, called to a work of redemptive ministry, the messenger through whom God's purpose of redeeming love is to be carried out. The very heart of God is unfolded for us here; and we see that His purpose is not for Israel alone but for all the world. "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

[1] i. 18, vi. 7. [2] lvii. 15.
[3] Cp. such passages as xliii. 25, xliv. 21, 22.

the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (xlix. 6).

The classical expression of the consciousness of sin in the Old Testament is of course Psalm li. Sin is there set out as an offence against a Personal God: "against thee, thee only, have I sinned." The sinner comes face to face with God, realizes his uncleanness in God's sight, and prays for pardon and cleansing. The inwardness of sin is emphasized. It is more than a matter of wrong outward acts. God desires "truth in the inward parts." There is something wrong with thought and will and imagination, which must be set right. The alienation from God caused by sin is expressed in the cry, "Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me." And though the Psalmist recognizes that he comes of a sinful stock, that there is an entail of sin upon the race ("in sin did my mother conceive me"), he does not offer this as an excuse for his own sinning. He makes no excuses for himself, but just throws himself on God's mercy.[1]

[1] The Old Testament admits the existence of what later theology has called Original Sin. There is a twist or distortion of human nature present in all men. But sin is not the right word to use in this

In the face of this Old Testament picture of God and man, how utterly futile is the criticism of foreign missions which says, "The heathen have the religion which suits them; why disturb their beliefs?" If God is what the Bible describes Him; if at His heart there is a passion for the redemption of men; if men need redemption; if sin is a reality, an active principle which is thwarting the carrying out of the divine purpose; then there is no room for argument; there is only room for action. The truth about God must be made known to the whole world that the power of that truth of a Redeeming God may lift men out of sin and all the miseries which sin involves into a new atmosphere, into a new relation of fellowship with God. We are quick enough to remove a stain from our drawing-room carpet; but we are content to leave the stain of sin, "the covering that is cast over all peoples, and the veil that is spread over all nations." Is it that some of us have never seen the stain in our own lives, or felt the need of pardon and renewal?

connection. There is no sin proper until the will deliberately identifies itself with the inherited evil tendency.

Chapter IV The O.T. Idea of Redemption

GOD is presented in the Old Testament as a Redeemer, as having a redemptive purpose which He progressively executes. It is this idea of God which we have now briefly to examine. At the basis of the conception lies the thought of a divine covenant made with Israel. The covenant was made with the nation, not with individuals. The two marked characteristics of the national life of the Hebrews were an intense consciousness of nationhood, and the religious interpretation given to the national life. They felt themselves "a peculiar people," selected by God and standing to Him in a special relation, because He had made a covenant with them. Three covenants are mentioned in the Pentateuch. The first is with Abraham,[1] with its sign circumcision; the covenant with Noah,[2] with the rainbow as its sign; and the covenant at Mount Sinai,[3] of which the symbol was

[1] Gen. xv. and xvii. [2] Gen. ix. 8–17.
[3] Exod. xxiv.

the blood of the covenant sprinkled on the people. The making of covenants or contracts was a common thing in ordinary life; but whereas in the case of a covenant between men both parties to the contract stood on an equality, in the case of Jehovah's covenant with Israel the initiative and primacy lay with God. God proposes the covenant, arranges its conditions, and the nation accepts them and promises to observe them.

Now the important thing to notice is that the covenant with Israel is an expression of the *character* of God. God entered into covenant with this people because love moved Him to do so, and because He had a purpose for them which He wished to carry out. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." [1] Hosea in these words goes to the heart of the matter. God of His free grace chose Israel, and called the nation into fellowship with Himself. That being the character of God, it remained for the nation to trust God, to be loyal to Him, and by trust and obedience prove the richness of His love. A national covenant could come into existence only when there was a

[1] xi. 1.

nation. Hence, since the Hebrews could not be called a nation till after the deliverance from Egypt, the covenant at Sinai marks the beginning of the covenant-relationship. The covenants with the patriarchs are a projection back into earlier times of a religious consciousness which took this form centuries later. In the prophetic teaching it is the freeing of the nation from Egyptian slavery which is the signal proof of the divine care and purpose, and when the prophets refer to the covenant they have in mind the covenant at Sinai. But a covenant-relationship may truly be said to exist prior to any formal ratification of the covenant. The writers of the Old Testament saw this, and so the picture of God which is drawn in Genesis is the picture of a covenant God, that is, of a God who from the first enters into loving fellowship with men. It is a pity that the main idea which we associate with Creation is a making out of nothing. A far more significant thought is that of the divine self-expression, of God going out of Himself to establish relationships with things and persons. Deeper, then, than the idea of specific covenant is the Old Testament's initial thought of God as a Being who is not content to live in isolation, but calls

into existence a world for which He may care, and makes men in His own image that He may enter into communion with them. The covenant with one people is but the expression in intenser terms of a covenant attitude, or attitude of purposeful relationship, towards all existence.[1]

Now the story of Israel, viewed from the religious standpoint of the Old Testament, is just the story of God's faithfulness to the covenant and of the nation's unfaithfulness. Not all the prophets mention the word "covenant,"[2] but none of them ever lose sight of the covenant-relationship. Indeed, the one object of their teaching is to recall the people to the obligation which God's choice of them involves. Failure on their part to observe the covenant calls down merited punishment from God. The "righteousness" of Jehovah, in one aspect of it, means such fidelity to the covenant, that if Israel does not perform its share of the covenant, Jehovah must punish. Privilege implies responsibility, as Amos taught in

[1] For an interesting treatment of the Sabbath covenant and of the covenants with Noah and Abraham, see A. B. Davidson, *op. cit.*, pp. 245–6.

[2] It is not mentioned in Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Habakkuk, Zephaniah.

tones which must have startled his audience. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities" (iii. 2). When Samuel recounts the "righteous" acts of the Lord, he includes not only Israel's deliverance, but Israel's chastisements at the hands of their enemies (1 Sam. xii. 7–9). But however much God may punish, He can never finally abandon the nation. The divine promise made to Abraham after the trial of his faith in the matter of sacrificing Isaac, that his seed will be multiplied as the sand, "and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed," is irrevocable (Gen. xxii. 17–18). "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie unto David; his seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me" (Ps. lxxxix. 34–36).[1] It is this fidelity of God to His covenant which is the basis of the optimism of the prophets. In "the cloudy and dark day" they saw the sun behind the clouds, and, though the national fortunes seemed

[1] Cp. Ps. cv. 8–10, which pictures God as remembering His covenant for ever; and the important promise made through Nathan to David, 2 Sam. vii. 5–17.

irretrievably shattered, they were able to speak of a remnant in Israel who should be saved and be the seed-plot from which a new and purified nation should grow. Within the actual Israel they saw an ideal Israel for whom the divine promises should be fulfilled.[1]

Jeremiah emphasizes the idea of the covenant. Living in troubled times, when the ruin of Judah was imminent and the national past seemed full of failure, he can yet speak of the renewal of the covenant. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers . . . but this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (xxxi. 31–34). An earlier age, while not denying that moral relationships were involved in the covenant, perhaps thought too much of national expansion and national greatness. Jeremiah spiritualizes the covenant, and

[1] This doctrine of the remnant is markedly characteristic of Isaiah's teaching; but it is also prominent in Second Isaiah, where the Servant = ideal Israel or the faithful nucleus of the nation.

points out that the covenant proceeds from a God whose nature it is to forgive sin when there is true repentance, and who cares supremely for character.

Hosea pictures God as hurt by Israel's transgression, and as yearning over them in love. This strong tenderness of God, this passion of God for His people, comes out vividly in Second Isaiah. No prophet makes more clear the character of God which is the groundwork of the covenant. It is a character of redeeming love. God loves Israel, longs to save the nation,[1] holds out forgiveness in open hands, is ready to blot out the past,[2] comes in the strength of His love close to the nation's life,[3] and, though He is the maker of the stars and the ruler of the nations, seeks for His dwelling-place the broken and humble spirit.[4] The climax is reached in the portraiture of the Servant, whose work is redemptive through and through. When we read such a passage as Isaiah liii. we feel that, within the limits of Old Testament religion, there is nothing more to be said about redemption. Here is love suffering for sin, and by its patient endurance

[1] xlv. 17. [2] xliv. 22, xliii. 25.
[3] xl. 11, lxiii. 8, 9. [4] lvii. 15.

winning the victory. Here is love carrying the burden of another that that other may be redeemed by being transformed into the same likeness of suffering love. The Servant is God's messenger, His representative. In him we are to see the heart of God and the tenderness of the divine purpose. But God in the Old Testament is essentially transcendent. However close He comes to human life, He never actually shares it. It remained for the New Testament to show that the Suffering Servant was none other than God Himself. "In all their affliction he was afflicted"; yes, but there is no Cross in the Old Testament. The great redemptive movement unfolded in the Hebrew Scriptures lacks its crown. We feel that something more was needed, that prophecy was reaching out for a richer fulfilment than anything it had yet received in the history of Israel. The fulfilment came in Christ; His Cross sets the seal on all that went before. In the light of it we look back on this earlier movement, and understand far more clearly what a growing revelation and a growing redemptive purpose mean.

The covenant was with the nation, and the rite of circumcision was the means whereby

each individual member of the nation was brought within the scope of the covenant.[1] But what was to be done if the covenant was broken owing to the frailty of human nature? Could it be restored? Could any amends be made for transgressions? Here comes in the significance of the sacrificial system, about which something must be said, since it played such an important part in Hebrew religion.

Now we have to distinguish between two classes of transgression. There was the deliberate, wilful transgression, the sin done "with a high hand" (Num. xv. 30), such a sin, for example, as the worship of another god, or idolatry. Here was deliberate rejection of the covenant-relationship with Jehovah, and for such sin no sacrifice availed. "That soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the word of the Lord, and hath broken His commandment; that soul shall be utterly cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him" (Num. xv. 30, 31). The national sins denounced by the prophets were chiefly of this class. It did not follow, however, that the offender's case was hopeless. He could not look for relief to any of the usages of the established religion; but

[1] Gen. xvii. 10.

he could throw himself in penitence upon the forgiveness of God. He could not necessarily expect to avoid punishment, for God was no easy-going God, but he might expect mercy and restoration after discipline. Was not the burden of all the prophetic teaching just this —that an apostate nation might be brought back into covenant-relationship?

But not all sins were of this kind. There were unintentional offences, sins done in ignorance, and sins which, though offences against Jehovah, did not imply a disavowal of the covenant, or rebellion against God. The people who say deliberately, like Milton's Satan, "Evil, be thou my good," are probably always a minority in any nation. Most of us sin through weakness of will, or neglect to form habits of goodness. For this class of sins sacrifices were provided.

It is not necessary for our present purpose to discuss in any detail the complicated system of sacrifices in Israel. An account of them will be found in the opening chapters of Leviticus. But it is of interest to try to discover what ideas underlie the rite of sacrifice as a whole, a rite very ancient in the history of religion and found existing in many nations. There is general agreement

among scholars that propitiation is not the original or primary object of sacrifice. In primitive society the tribal bond is strong; the tie of blood is the bond which holds the group together. This blood-kinship was extended to the god of the tribe, who was regarded as belonging in a peculiar way to the tribe, and as being of the same blood as his worshippers. Sacrifice was an expression of this community of descent. The flesh of the slain animal was eaten by the whole tribe, its blood being offered to the god. The fact that the god shared in the common tribal meal bound him still closer to the tribe. He was in honour compelled to protect the interests of the tribe. The blood was offered to the god as being the seat of life, the vital principle of the victim, and so the most valuable part of it.[1] The deity, as piety required, was given the best. To offer something to God was the natural expression of man's recognition that he depended on a superior power; and so, as we should expect, the idea of giving in sacrifice became prominent. It was an extension of the original offering of the blood. The gift might be made in a spirit of pure devotion, or it might be made

[1] Gen. ix. 4.

in order to win the favour of the god. The more costly the gift, the better would the god be pleased. Human sacrifices are probably to be explained in this way, and notably the sacrifice of a first-born son. Could a father offer the god anything more valuable than the life of his child?[1] Thus the idea of a gift developed into the idea of a propitiatory sacrifice. Much uncertainty exists about the whole subject of sacrifice, and an immense variety of opinion obtains among scholars.[2] And in addition to the difficulty of interpreting rightly the meaning of sacrifice and tracing the development of the ideas involved in it, is the further problem of how far the late priestly legislation described in Leviticus reflects earlier usages. That question I leave entirely on one side. All I have attempted in this very brief sketch is to show that more than one idea is involved in the ritual of sacrifice.

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament illustrates the complexity of the notion

[1] Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac (Gen. xxii.) and Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter (Judges xi. 34–40).

[2] The complexity of the subject will be realized by anyone who will read the article on "Sacrifice" in Hastings's *Dictionary of Religion and Ethics.*

of sacrifice. Three main sacrifices are mentioned in Leviticus. (a) *The Peace-Offering* (iii. and vii. 11–34), which was a sacrificial feast celebrated in a spirit of thanksgiving, on such occasions as a victory,[1] or the accession of a king to the throne,[2] or the gathering of the crops.[3] The idea underlying it is that of a common meal shared by God and His worshippers. (b) *The Burnt-Offering* (i. 1–17 and vi. 8–13). Here the idea is of a gift offered, which must be of the best. The animal must be without blemish. The gift was both symbolic of the dedication of the worshipper to God, and also intended to win, or retain, His favour. (c) *The Sin-Offering* (iv. 1–v. 13 and vi. 24–30), under which may be included the *Guilt-Offering* as essentially of the same kind (v. 14—vi. 7 and vii. 1—10). Here the idea of atonement for transgression is central. The Sin-Offering was made to "cover" unintentional transgressions, and to restore the broken covenant-relationship. The sacrificial system of Israel culminated in the ritual of the great Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi.), on which the high-priest, after having offered a bullock as a sin-offering

[1] 1 Sam. xi. 15. [2] 1 Kings i. 19.
[3] Exod. xxii. 29.

for himself and his household, and having sprinkled its blood on the mercy-seat, killed a goat as a sin-offering for the people, and then confessed the sins of the people over the head of a second goat, which was sent away into the wilderness and then let loose. The goat bore away the sins of the congregation. God would no more remember them.[1]

What is the missionary significance of the Old Testament ideas of redemption and sacrifice? May we not sum it up by saying that we have here a picture of God's movement towards man, and man's movement towards God? Sacrifice is one expression of man's need for God. As religion in the course of its development became more closely connected with morality, and as the sense of sin deepened, the piacular or atoning significance of sacrifice came into greater prominence. Man, conscious that his fellowship with God was broken, sought means to restore it. The sacrificial system in the Old Testament is more highly charged with ethical ideas than the sacrificial systems of other nations, because the God-consciousness in Israel was

[1] The goat was sent away "for Azazel" (Lev. xvi. 26). The probable interpretation is that Azazel was a demon-spirit haunting the wilderness, and representing evil.

more developed. But a wide survey of the history of humanity shows men everywhere seeking God "if haply they might feel after Him and find Him," trying by sacrifice to become united to deity, conscious of powers above and beyond them, with which they must enter into relation. Prayer, the varied ritual of sacrifice, all the strange forms which religion has taken, are just the proof that man cannot do without God. There is a vast pathos in this vision of humanity groping after God in the twilight. That, on one side; and on the other God meeting man's search by a gradual revelation of Himself. That God should have chosen to make what we believe the truest revelation of His character and purposes to one nation only of the ancient world raises difficulties, some of which are discussed in the next chapter. But if God has indeed the redemptive purpose which the Old Testament records, if it is His nature to seek to draw men into fellowship with Himself, then, surely, here is the answer to this world-wide human need. The feeling of the heathen after God must be viewed, not statically, but dynamically. It is a movement, like the climbing of the plant towards the light. It implies the capacity for further growth. It

needs but the right stimulus to bring out its latent powers. See it in the light of God's educative and redemptive purpose, see it in the light of His character of love, and this dim searching of the heathen after God is transformed into a prophecy of the completing of the incomplete, of God fulfilling the instinct which He has implanted. But the divine purpose has to be carried out through us. "How shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? (Rom. x. 14, 15).

MANY nations have put their golden age in the past; Israel put hers in the future. The religion of Israel was one of expectation. God was leading the nation on into fuller truth, giving it a growing experience of His graciousness and fidelity. In Messianic prophecy we trace the development of this optimistic temper, as it gathers round the two ideas of a Kingdom of God and a Messianic King. The prophets, however, it must be remembered, in unfolding their conceptions of the Messianic age, were working upon the basis of older material. Tradition spoke of a covenant made with Abraham, which, though it was a covenant made primarily with the one nation of Israel, had a wider outlook. "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. xii. 3).[1] Other nations, that is, were to share in some

[1] Cp. Gen. xviii. 18; xxviii. 14. In two passages (xxii. 18, xxvi. 4) the right translation is "shall bless themselves," and this may be the meaning in the other passages.

way in the privileges given to Abraham and his descendants. There is the germ here of a religious universalism. More important was the promise made to David and his house (2 Sam. vii. 5–17): "And thine house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." The influence upon Messianic prophecy of the reign and figure of David can hardly be over-estimated. Popular tradition invested David with ideal attributes. His reign in the national imagination was regarded as the pattern reign. It set the standard for the hopes of the future. The promise made to him grew into the expectation of a coming king whose rule should inaugurate the Messianic age.[1] Israel thought of its government as a theocracy. The king was God's vicegerent; he had been selected by God; God was ruling through him. "The spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was upon my tongue" (2 Sam. xxiii. 2). Thus David describes his relation to Jehovah. When written prophecy began, the prophets very naturally made use of this Davidic hope and outlook. In Messianic pro-

[1] Note how the figure of the king is idealized in Psalms ii, xlv, lxii, cx.

phecy we have a blending of the idea of a *kingdom* of righteousness and peace which God will establish; of a *new covenant* which God will make with Israel; and of a *King or Ruler* of the line of David, through whom the blessings of the Messianic age will be realized.

Our chief concern in this chapter is to trace the growth of a universalistic element in Messianic prophecy. We want to discover the missionary element in the prophets. Only a brief sketch can be attempted, but sufficient references will be given to enable the reader to work the subject out for himself.

The concluding section of Amos (ix. 11–15) is probably a later addition by another hand. Material prosperity alone is mentioned as the feature of the Messianic age; and this ill accords with the intense ethical fervour of the prophet, or with his wide-sweeping message of judgment.[1] But, assuming that these verses are an integral part of the prophecy, we see in them a conception of Israel's relation to the nations which frequently occurs in the other prophets. Israel is to be supreme; other nations are to be servants of Israel. Edom, the hated enemy of Israel,

[1] Cp. Amos in Sir G. Adam Smith's *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, vol. i. pp. 189–195.

is particularly mentioned as reduced to a state of vassalage (ix. 12). Israel's future supremacy was bound up with the covenant between Jehovah and the nation. Jehovah could not be untrue to the covenant, however much Israel had broken it. His original choice of Israel would one day bear its full fruit in Israel's domination of the nations. But there is no word in this passage of the heathen sharing in the spiritual blessings of Israel's religion.

Hosea, again, says nothing on the subject of the nations in this connection; but in the development of the Messianic hope he is important for two reasons. First, he includes in his picture of the future the figure of the ideal ruler. "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king" (iii. 5). Secondly, by his emphasis on the love and pity of Jehovah, and His yearning over Israel, he prepared the way for such a thought of God as was seen ultimately to imply a redemptive attitude towards all mankind. The more clearly God is realized as Redeemer, the less can His redemptive action be limited in scope.

Micah, who prophesied two or three decades later than Amos and Hosea, pictures the

nations as sharing in the blessings of the Messianic age. "And many nations shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (iv. 2). An era of universal peace will be established (iv. 3, 4); Jehovah will gather the outcasts of Israel and Himself reign over them in Zion (iv. 6, 7); His earthly representative on the throne will be a king of David's line, born at Bethlehem (v. 2).[1]

A spirit of universalism breathes in the writings of Isaiah, Micah's great contemporary. In xi. 1–10 we have a description of the coming ideal Ruler "of the stock of Jesse" and of the peace following from his rule. The whole earth is to be "full of the knowledge of the Lord," and the nations shall come voluntarily to the Messianic King, seeking the blessings which he has to give (ver. 10). In chapter xix.[2] there is a remarkable

[1] Sometimes Jehovah is pictured as Himself Ruler in the Messianic age; at other times He rules through a king.

[2] Some scholars regard vers. 16–25 as a post-exilic addition.

picture of the conversion of Egypt to faith in Jehovah. The God of Israel is made known to the Egyptians by the religious observances of Israelite dwellers in Egypt (vers. 19–21). The Egyptians begin to worship Him and to pray to Him. Then upon Egypt falls some divine chastisement, which leads to the conversion of the nation (vers. 20–22). And the vision broadens out to include Assyria. Egypt, Assyria, Israel shall all be united in the worship of Jehovah. "For that the Lord of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance (vers. 23–25).[1] The figure of the Messianic Prince of David's line is prominent in Isaiah's picture of the future. In addition to xi. 1–10 we have in ix. 6 a description of his name, as signifying his character or qualities. Because he possesses these qualities no power can resist him. His kingdom must grow and spread. "Of the increase of his government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne

[1] Other universalistic passages in Isaiah are xviii. 7, in which the Ethiopians give a present to Jehovah; and xxiii. 18, in which the trade of Tyre is consecrated to Jehovah.

of David, and upon his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with judgment and with righteousness from henceforth even for ever" (ix. 7).

Jeremiah takes up and emphasizes the thought of the Messianic King ruling over a saved and restored nation. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute judgment and justice in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord is our righteousness" (xxiii. 5, 6).[1] He also speaks of the new covenant which God will establish (xxxi. 31–34). It is to be a spiritual covenant; the divine law is to be written on the hearts of the people, who will all know God in His character of redeeming love. Jeremiah sees that if this is the character of God the revelation cannot be limited to Israel. Hence he has a vision of other nations sharing in the new truth. "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it,

[1] Cp. xxxiii. 14–17, where the passage above is in part repeated, and xxx. 9.

to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the stubbornness of their evil heart" (iii. 17).

The sense of Israel's missionary vocation is strongly developed in Second Isaiah, in whose writings the Messianic hope is portrayed in fresh colours. Israel is depicted as the Servant of the Lord. But Servant has both a wider and a narrower meaning. The nation as a whole is God's Servant, but as a whole is unfaithful to its calling, and blind to God's purposes for it (xli. 8, 9; xlii. 19). But within the larger whole is a remnant or nucleus which is faithful, and to this nucleus the title Servant is specially applied (xlii. 1–7, lxi). Very clearly is his missionary calling described. "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" (xlix. 6). "I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (xlii. 6). The isles are pictured as waiting for God's law (xlii. 4); the nations

"run unto" Israel restored and glorified "because of the Lord thy God" (lv. 5).

The Servant takes the place of the Messianic King of earlier prophecy, and comes before us as a Suffering Servant (l. 6, lii. 13–liii. 12), who by his sufferings is to redeem his people. "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (liii. 11). We cannot limit that to the redemption of Israel. Taken in connection with the world-mission of the Servant, the words imply that the prophet had a vision of his nation, purged by suffering, realising at last the purpose for which God had at the first called them.

But once again Israel failed. Counter tendencies were at work, as we see in the prophecies of Ezekiel. He repeats Jeremiah's teaching about the new covenant, and the change of heart which God will bring about in the nation (xxxvi. 24–27); he introduces the figure of the Davidic Prince (xxxiv. 24), but has no word of the Gentiles sharing in the Messianic blessing. They will see Israel's glory, they will realize the special relation in which Israel stands to God (xxxvii. 28), but they will know that it is not for them. Ezekiel is the prophet of national par-

ticularism. While the Exile deepened his conception of spiritual religion and showed him the value of the individual soul, it intensified his fears of contamination from contact with heathenism. Israel's only hope of safety in the future lay in remaining isolated, protected by law and ritual and ceremony. The nation, as we know, took that narrower road when it came back to Palestine. Its religious exclusiveness developed. It produced the Pharisee of our Lord's day. The writings of Malachi and Jonah stand as proof that more liberal tendencies were still active. But the official religion of the nation was separated by an enormous gulf from the magnificent universalism which breathes in Messianic prophecy at its best.[1]

[1] In the brief sketch of universalism in the prophets, owing to want of space, only the larger figures are mentioned. But the following passages in other prophets should be noticed.

Zephaniah ii. 11, iii. 20, where all the nations are pictured as worshipping Jehovah, and Israel is "a name and a praise" among all peoples. Zephaniah prophesied in the reign of Josiah, which began 639 B.C.

Zechariah prophesied shortly after the return from exile. Chaps. i.–viii. are almost certainly his genuine prophecies. The remainder of the book is by another hand, and most critics would make it post-exilic. In viii. 20–23 the nations are pictured as coming to Jerusalem to seek Jehovah, and "ten men . . . out of

As we study Messianic prophecy we are watching a growth. We see an ideal which progressively unfolds itself. In its main conceptions of a coming kingdom of peace and righteousness, and of a divinely endowed Ruler, and of a presence of God among His people, the ideal remains the same through the centuries; though there is one marked transformation when the agent of redemption is figured as a Suffering Servant. But in details the ideal varies with each prophet. This is only natural, seeing that prophecy has its roots in the historical circumstances

all the languages of the nations shall even take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."

Haggai, the contemporary of Zechariah, predicts the glory of the Temple which is being rebuilt, and says that "the desirable things of all nations" shall be contributed to it, the implication being that the nations will recognize Jehovah as God (ii. 6–9).

Malachi, written when the Jews were under Persian rule (*circ.* 460–445 B.C.), is notable for two reasons. It announces no judgment on the heathen, as do all the earlier prophecies; and recognizes that the heathen are really religious. In fact their worship of Jehovah is purer than that of the Jew (i. 11, 12). The spirit of the book approaches that of Jonah.

Psalms xlvii. and lxvii. are essentially universalistic. Note in the latter the nations entering themselves on the roll as citizens of Zion. Psalm lxxii. is throughout Messianic. All kings and nations are pictured as serving Jehovah (vers. 10–11); cp. also Ps. ii. 8, xlv. 12, 17.

of the prophet's time, and is God-given spiritual insight into the divine purpose as it works itself out in contemporary events. Each prophet draws his own picture of the future. All are sure that God will make good His redemptive scheme, but none have any knowledge of when the Kingdom will come. At times, moved by the urgency of some contemporary crisis, they speak of it as near at hand; at other times they see it as a more distant goal. There is an important predictive element in prophecy, but it must be rightly understood. The prophet was not supernaturally enabled to foretell detailed events in a distant future, and no prophet had any vision of Jesus Christ. But their whole work was predictive in a much deeper and more significant manner. They predicted the realisation in the future of an ideal; and we, looking back on the whole movement of Messianic prophecy in the light of Jesus Christ, can see that the utterances of the prophets had a meaning far richer than they themselves knew. To look for minute fulfilment of predictions is to misunderstand prophecy.[1] Let us rather see in

[1] We cannot say that there was no detailed prediction. Compare, for example, Isa. liii. with the events of our Lord's Passion; or Micah v. 2. But this is a very

Christ the fulfilment of the large, spiritual principles of prophecy, the broad ideal realized in a historical Person. In particular, let us see in Him the vindication of that universalistic hope which looked for a world-wide redemption and a religion freed from the narrowness of local creeds. You may find proof of design in details; more clearly do you find it in the gradual realization of a large, spiritual purpose. Messianic prophecy is missionary in character through and through. The seed ripens before our eyes, and becomes a tree. The tree grows, and continually puts out new branches; and the leaves of the tree are "for the healing of the nations."

The question is often asked why, if God wanted to give a revelation to the world, He did not make it universally known, instead of entrusting it to one nation, which finally proved untrue to its trust. To justify the ways of God to man is beyond human power. But, since the question is asked, some kind of an answer to it must be attempted. The answer which I should give would be along the following lines. In the first place, to

subordinate element in prophecy, though it was once considered its main purpose.

entrust a divine revelation to men is a serious matter. There is such a thing as casting pearls before swine. Would mankind generally, at that stage of its evolution, have understood or treasured the revelation? The revelation was in fact given to a people extraordinarily tenacious of its nationality, as history shows, and gifted with a remarkable genius for religion. Hence it had a better chance of being appreciated and preserved than it would probably have had, had it been made known universally. Again, the more spiritual a religion is, the more does quality rather than quantity count; and you are more likely to get quality in a limited area than in a wider one. Long training and discipline were needed before Israel could grasp the spiritual quality of the revelation, and even then the common level of the popular religion remained low. Once more, God's general method of operation everywhere is evolutionary. From less to more, from the imperfect to the perfect, from the germ to the mature organism, is the plan adopted both in nature and history. To entrust a revelation to a selected people that through them it might be spread universally is consonant with the large scheme of the

universe. The real problem is to account for Israel's failure; and there we can say no more than this, that Divine Love never uses the method of compulsion, but relies on man's co-operation. The individual fails to fulfil God's purpose for him; may not a nation fail too? Israel failed to be the missionary people which her own prophets saw that she was meant to be. But her failure meant that she cherished all the more carefully the revelation which she thought was for herself alone. She preserved it for the world. It has not lost its missionary quality. That shines out all the more brightly since Christ has thrown His light upon the past. Christians have caught the treasure which Hebrew hands let slip. God's purpose still stands. He calls to us to work with Him in carrying it out.

Chapter VI — *The Book of Jonah*

THE Book of Jonah is marked off by its form from the writings of the other minor prophets with which it is customarily classed. It is prophecy in the shape of a narrative or story, without the discourses and exhortations which characterize prophetic teaching. But the story is no mere chronicle of events; it is pregnant with religious lessons, conveyed with matchless art. And there is no other book in the Old Testament which comes so near to that understanding of God's love which we owe to the revelation brought by Jesus Christ.

The story is an allegory or dramatic parable.[1] Is the inspiration of the writer any the less, if we treat it as such and not as strict history? If Jesus could teach by parable in New Testament times, why in Old Testament times, and among an Oriental

[1] For proof of this readers are referred to such a commentary as that of Sir G. Adam Smith's *The Book of the Twelve Prophets.*

people who loved parable, could not God teach in the same way? Never was the heavenly meaning of an earthly story more clear than in this missionary parable. The purpose of the book is to show that God cares for the heathen, that His redemptive purpose includes them in its scope, and that if a special revelation was made to Israel it was in order that they might make it known to others. This extension of the divine purpose to the heathen brings into prominence the character of God as love. That God was love and was ready to forgive a repentant Israel, Hosea, Jeremiah, Second Isaiah had already emphasized. The Book of Jonah, if, as is probable, it is post-exilic,[1] intensifies this thought of God, and ranges itself on the side of that element of universalism which, as we have seen, was present in Messianic prophecy.

Jonah in the story represents the nation of Israel, which as a whole refused to carry

[1] Driver places its composition somewhere in the fifth century B.C.; cp. *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament*, p. 301. Many scholars give it a much later date. In any case its author cannot possibly be the prophet Jonah of the reign of Jeroboam II—about 780 B.C. (2 Kings xiv. 25), though it may be based upon some tradition about him. It does not claim to be by him.

out its missionary responsibility. We have to make allowances for this nation. How they had suffered at the hands of the heathen! How their small country had been the battlefield for the rivalries of the great empires which lay to south and north of them! The strong feeling of nationhood which characterized them not unnaturally developed into a proud exclusiveness, which suffering had converted into hatred of their heathen neighbours. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it." Jonah refused to obey and fled, because he had a lurking suspicion that God's purpose for Nineveh was one of mercy. "Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion" (iv. 2). Israel knew the graciousness and pity of God; but could not bear to think of them being extended to the heathen.

The great fish which swallowed Jonah represents in the story the Exile. This is no fanciful interpretation of the critics. There is warrant for it in the Old Testament itself. In Jeremiah li. 34 we read, "Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me . . . he hath swallowed me up like a

dragon . . . he hath cast me out." And again we read in verse 44, "And I will do judgement upon Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up." In the popular language of the day the Exile was described as the swallowing of the nation by some monster of the sea, "always the symbol of the prophets for the tossing heathen world that was ready to engulf" Israel.[1] The vomiting of Jonah upon the land represents the return from Exile.

Jonah ultimately goes to Nineveh, but with reluctance and evidently in a bad temper. The repentance of Nineveh is described in chapter iii. This is too much for the prophet, who begs God to take away his life (iv. 3), and then sulks, sitting outside the city in an arbour, watching what would become of it (iv. 5). Then follows the inimitable account of the perishing of the gourd which gave the prophet shelter, and of his grief at the loss of the green thing he loved, and of God's method of dealing with him. "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto

[1] Cp. Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 523–5.

death. And the Lord said, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city?" (iv. 9–11). After the Exile the nation grew more jealous of its own privileges, fenced itself round with ecclesiastical barriers, became more exclusive. It failed to learn its lesson. Had the spirit of universalism which was there in Messianic prophecy at its best spread throughout the nation, its attitude to Christ and His message would have been very different. Again, we must make allowances. It was probably necessary for the returning exiles, surrounded by enemies and in danger of contamination from impure faiths, to guard their new-formed Church-State by drastic regulations; but in their zeal for the Law they forgot the wider message of some of the prophets.

In the story we have two pictures of the heathen. First, there are the sailors on the ship in which Jonah took passage when he fled to go to Tarshish. How do they treat him? They refuse to cast him overboard, though he counsels them to do it, but row hard to try to get back to shore (i. 13). It

is only with the utmost reluctance, and with a prayer to Jonah's God for pardon, that they at last consent (i. 14, 15). And then, when Jonah, roused from sleep in the vessel's hold, confesses what he has done, after the lot has fallen on him, instead of showing resentment against him, they ask his advice, and turn to his God in awe and reverence. With deliberate purpose the author presents the hated heathen in a noble light, and shows them capable of receiving religious truth. And what of Jonah? He began, at any rate, to learn his lesson. "In these sailors he sees heathen turned to the fear of the Lord. All that he has fled to avoid happens there before his own eyes and through his own mediation."[1] The crisis brings out the good in Jonah. He offers his own life for the heathen whom he would fain put beyond the pale of God's mercy.

The heathen are again brought before us in the shape of the inhabitants of Nineveh. They hear the prophet's call to repentance. "They turned from their evil way" (iii. 10) and proved themselves worthy of having

[1] Adam Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 520. Those who know this commentary will realize my indebtedness to it.

the message of salvation preached to them. Heathen have consciences and hearts susceptible to the touch of divine love. Heathen have souls; they too are made in the divine image. And the God of love, who made them, cares for them, and wants to reveal Himself to them. Note the description of Nineveh, "that great city; wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle" (iv. 11). It is a pathetic picture of heathen helplessness and heathen need. It makes its appeal to the divine heart; "should I not have pity on Nineveh?" Should it not make its appeal to our hearts? With this vision of God's all-embracing love the book closes. It is the one completely missionary book in the Old Testament.

Chapter VII *The Teaching of Jesus*

WHAT Jesus taught He acted out in His own life. This is more than an example of a person practising what he preaches; it raises the fundamental problem of Christianity, "What think ye of Christ?" For the postulate of Christianity is that in Jesus Christ we are to see God Incarnate. In Him is the final revelation of the character of God. And so if a Christian is asked what God is like, he will reply that God is like Jesus. The Being of God must always remain a mystery to men; there must be sides and activities of the divine nature of which we can never hope to have knowledge; but let us remember that the original meaning of the word "mystery" was, not something entirely hidden, but something partially revealed. The claim of Christianity is that the innermost nature of God, so far as the divine purpose for humanity is concerned, has been unfolded in the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

In any religion the determining feature is its doctrine of God. What Jesus taught, and in His own Person revealed, about God will therefore give us the key to His whole system of thought and practice. His doctrine of God is summed up in the one word "Father." But the divine Fatherhood may be interpreted in different ways. God is Father as Creator, or Sovereign, and both these thoughts of God were familiar in Judaism and pagan religions. Jesus, while He did not deny the truth of such thoughts, did not place His emphasis upon them. What He emphasized was the love of God. God's Fatherhood meant Love, a love utterly tender, completely trustworthy, eternal as the very Being of God Himself, a love without variation or "shadow that is cast by turning." This was something new in the history of religion. The Old Testament had, it is true, spoken of God's tenderness to Israel, and of His forgiving love (*e.g.* Ps. ciii. 1–13), and in the Book of Jonah that forgiving love is extended to the heathen; but not till Jesus came was the character of God exhibited as in innermost essence a character of boundless love. God, then, could be trusted; the universe was not

hostile, but friendly, the scene of the working out of a loving purpose. This love of God embraced all creation, but found its supreme expression in relation to man, and this in two ways. In the first place, the human soul was of special value in God's eyes, of such value that in order to redeem men God came to earth wearing our human nature. In the second place, this love of God was intended to call out an answering love on the part of man. The correlative of Fatherhood is Sonship. Men are sons of God, and God's purpose is that they shall grow into an understanding of that filial relationship, live as sons, and explore the riches of their Father's love. It is just here that the uniqueness of Christianity lies. For it exhibits Jesus as the perfect Son. In a personal life, a truly human life, is seen the double movement of divine love and human response. At the root of the consciousness of Jesus lay this sense of filial relationship, and His life was a flawless exhibition of the possibilities of human sonship based upon the recognition of divine Fatherhood.

Such a thought of God becomes meaningless if you limit it by racial or national conceptions. *All* men are sons of God; all

are objects of the divine love. If God's essential nature is love, and that love has any relationship whatever with the life of humanity, then its purposes must be world-wide. And so we find Jesus in His teaching matching the thought of the Divine Fatherhood by the thought of the Brotherhood of Man. The lawyer asked, "Who is my neighbour?" and for answer was given the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke x. 25–37), in which we see love overleaping all barriers of race and creed and traditional hostility and caring simply for a suffering humanity. "Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; that ye may be sons of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. v. 44, 45). Who would wish to limit the sunrise? Who, that has once understood the message of Jesus about God's love, can deny that the ideal which He set up was of a single family of humanity bound together by the ties of mutual service and affection? And in point of fact such moral progress as humanity has made since Christianity appeared has been due to this conception of the worth of man as seen through the

eyes of Jesus. Behind all our ideals of social progress lies the inspiration derived from the teaching of Jesus about love and human brotherhood.[1]

In considering the teaching of Jesus we cannot separate the moral from the religious teaching. For Him, as for the prophets of the Old Testament, the heart of religion was morality, and moral endeavour found its inspiration in the thought of God and His purpose for the world. He blended ethics and religion into a living whole, and set up for the human race an ideal of living in which service to man was only service to God seen from a different angle, and man's heavenly sonship carried with it the practical duties of human brotherhood. This teaching is characterized by the following features, which witness to its universality.

(*a*) It is based on principle, not on law or statute. Jesus did not lay down rules, but enunciated large principles, which were capable of progressive application under very differing circumstances. A familiar example is His teaching about the Sabbath

[1] Cp. *The Teaching of Jesus*, by R. M. Ross, p. 98. I am indebted to this book for some suggestions in this chapter.

(Luke vi. 1–11). The saying, "The Son of man is lord of the sabbath," taken in connection with the other saying, "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark ii. 27), implies clearly that, however valuable rules may be, they are not tyrants meant to fetter the freedom of the spirit. There is a rule of Sabbath observance, and there is also a principle; and the latter is the more important since it admits of adaptation to varying circumstances. Take again His teaching about worship (John iv. 20–24) or fasting (Luke v. 33–39), or His refusal to settle a dispute about distribution of property (Luke xii. 14). In all these instances we see Him rising above the immediate problem of the moment, and enunciating a deeper truth, which not only contained the solution of the problem, but was capable of expansion so as to cover all problems of the same kind which might arise in the future. The teaching, in a word, was like leaven which would progressively leaven all the lump. It was germinal. As it sank into men's minds it would create its own appropriate environment in the world outside. And the more men grew to understand it, the more would be its transforming

influence on human society. The principle of the worth of the human soul, when its true meaning was seen, destroyed slavery; just as the principle of human brotherhood will in time destroy the caste system in India. Christianity has been sufficiently long in the world, and has been tried under such differing conditions of race and environment, that no question can seriously be raised about the universal applicability of Christ's teaching. The embodiment of the principles He laid down will doubtless vary in different races and countries. They do, in fact, vary now; which is proof of the universality of the teaching.

(*b*) Study Christ's parables, and note how expansiveness is of their very essence. Thus the tiny mustard seed becomes a tree sheltering the birds of the heaven (Matt. xiii. 32). Were there no birds except in Palestine? If the kingdom of heaven was like the mustard seed it must be meant to be universal in extent. At the Great Supper the servants are sent out into the highways and hedges to "constrain them to come in" (Luke xiv. 23). The narrow spirit which would limit privilege and hinder the free flow of divine love is rebuked in the parables of the

Labourers in the Vineyard and of the Prodigal Son.

(*c*) Consider the ideal which He set up as the goal of human endeavour. It is one in which love is given the first place, and motive, the inner spring of action, is emphasized. The first commandment is to love God completely; the second is to love your neighbour (Mark xii. 28–31). To be men possessed by the spirit of love was to be followers of Christ (John xiii. 35). By love is meant, not a weak sentiment or emotion, but a practical energy of service, based on a recognition of the worth of the human personality. Now all can show love in their lives. Love is a universal quality of humanity. The potentiality of love is in all men, and it is only in an atmosphere of love that personality can develop. By making love central in His ideal of goodness Jesus *ipso facto* universalized the ideal. Again, when for outward observance of a code of conduct He substituted inner motive, and judged men by the state of their hearts, He at once, at a stroke as it were, universalized His moral teaching; because, if it is the motive which matters, the form which the embodiment of the motive takes in action is unimportant. What we call a common-

place or trivial action may show the true spirit of the ideal equally with a great action.

> " All may of thee partake :
> Nothing can be so mean
> Which with his tincture (*for thy sake*)
> Will not grow bright and clean.
>
> A servant with this clause
> Makes drudgery divine;
> Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
> Makes that and the action fine." [1]

And the ideal of perfect goodness springing from love to God and man has an inexhaustible significance. It can never be outgrown, because it can never be completely attained. But each advance towards its realization serves to define it more clearly, and opens up some new meaning in divine Fatherhood and human brotherhood.

(*d*) In the earlier part of His ministry the teaching of Jesus gathers round the conception of the Kingdom of God.[2] The idea of a kingdom was of course familiar to the writers of the Old Testament. It underlay Messianic prophecy, and in the two centuries

[1] George Herbert's *The Elixir.*

[2] In St. Matthew it is usually called " the kingdom of heaven."

before Christ came was the central idea of the Apocalyptic movement. Despairing of a redemption of the existing order, the Jews began to pin their hopes upon a sudden divine intervention, either by God Himself, or by some chosen agent, which should bring in the Messianic kingdom and establish a new order. The Apocalypses reflect this hope in its varied aspects. The popular mind was steeped in apocalyptic ideas, which form the background of the Gospel narratives. Jesus adopted this conception of a coming kingdom, which the Baptist had loudly proclaimed, and began His ministry with the message, "The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel" (Mark i. 15). But He gave a new meaning to the conception, freed it from all political or nationalistic associations, spiritualized it, found the basis of it in the will and heart. "The kingdom of God is within you" (Luke xvii. 20). "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). The term "kingdom" carries with it associations of social and corporate life. Individuals can form a kingdom only by entering into relations with each

other. Jesus by His emphasis on the kingdom was reminding His hearers that they were a brotherhood bound together by the principles of love and service. Let them live as brothers and the kingdom would come on earth. In the Lord's Prayer the explanation of the clause, "Thy kingdom come," is given in the next clause, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." In heaven, in the ideal state, in the realm of supreme spiritual realities which is the home of God, there are no rivalries or hatreds. Love reigns omnipotent; true unity is achieved. That was the ideal at which men were to aim. The kingdom would come among men just in proportion as that ideal was realized. This explains why Jesus spoke of the kingdom both as a present fact and a future hope.[1] It could begin to come here and now, if men would live as brothers and sons of God, and the seed once rooted had in it capacities for indefinite expansion.

Perhaps the best definition of the Kingdom is that in a letter by the late Dr. Hort [2]—"the

[1] Cp. Luke xi. 20, iv. 17–21—the kingdom as having come; Matt. vi. 10, Luke xiii. 28, xxii. 18—the kingdom as coming in the future.

[2] *Life and Letters*, vol. ii. p. 278.

world of invisible laws by which God is ruling and blessing His creatures." The emphasis is upon the divine activity and initiative. The kingdom is not something which can be brought in by men's efforts, though men have to co-operate and make themselves channels of God's purpose, but it is the gift of God. It is from above. God holds out a gift to men, and they have to receive it.[1] Being the gift of the Universal Father it must be available for all men. The Jewish conception of the kingdom was narrowly nationalist. The Christian conception covers all humanity. And though Jesus, for practical purposes, and because He was born after the flesh a Jew, confined His mission for the most part to His own people, we cannot, without entirely stultifying His message, limit in any way its application to humanity. And we note how He came into personal touch with those who were not Jews and helped them. The Syrophœnician woman, the Roman centurion, the woman of Samaria,

[1] Note how the expressions used emphasize this aspect of the kingdom as a gift from above. It "comes" (Matt. vi. 10; Mark ix. 1); it is "given" and "received" (Matt. xxi. 43); it is "inherited" (Matt. xxv. 34); cp. article "Jesus Christ" in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible.*

all stand as witnesses to the Catholicity of His ideal.[1]

(*e*) The claims which He made in relation to His own Person and work have reference to mankind as a whole.[2] He demands in His followers personal loyalty to Himself;[3] claims to possess an unlimited authority,[4] which includes the right of final judgment;[5] offers to satisfy the deep religious needs of the human heart.[6] He speaks with authority as One who is in possession of the spiritual secret of life, and whose spiritual insight is based upon a unique relationship to the Father. That He was conscious of standing to God in special relationship is undoubted. "All things have been delivered unto me of my Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him" (Matt. xi. 27). Jesus called Himself the Son of Man. The

[1] Cp. such sayings as Matt. v. 14, viii. 11, 12; or the Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen.

[2] The references are to the Synoptic Gospels only: the Fourth Gospel receives separate treatment (cp. ch. ix.).

[3] Matt. xi. 29, x. 37–39; Luke xiv. 26.

[4] Matt. x. 32, 33.

[5] Matt. xxv. 31, 32.

[6] Matt. xi. 28, 29.

title is never used of Him by others; it is His name for Himself. This title was not a new one. It is found in the Old Testament, and in the Jewish apocalyptic writings. In the Old Testament in many passages it merely indicates " man " with the suggestion of human frailty and weakness. But in a passage in Daniel, which is important as being one of the sources of Apocalyptic, the phrase refers not to a person, but to the character of the new kingdom which is to supersede the kingdom of the beasts. They were based on force; it is to be based on humanity, on the spiritual qualities which are the mark of manhood.[1] In the Book of Enoch " Son of Man " is a personal title and refers to the Messiah, chiefly in connection with his function as judge of mankind.[2]

Jesus frequently used the title of Himself when He was speaking of the Judgment, and of the establishment of the new kingdom.[3] It thus has an eschatological significance.

[1] Daniel vii. 13, 14.

[2] There is still some dispute as to the date of this portion of Enoch called *The Similitudes* in which this title occurs, but the majority of scholars agree in regarding it as pre-Christian, and as belonging to the period 94–64 B.C.

[3] Matt. xiii. 41, xvi. 27, xix. 28, xxvi. 64.

But He also used it when He was describing His mission as one of service and self-sacrifice, as in the passage, " 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).[1] He took an old title and filled it with new meaning. I cannot do better than quote a paragraph from Sanday's article " Jesus Christ " in Hastings's *Dictionary of the Bible :*

" This comprehensive and deeply significant title touched at one end the Messianic and eschatological expectation through the turn which had been given to it in one section of Judaism (the Book of Enoch). At the other and opposite end it touched the idea of the Suffering Servant. But at the centre it is broadly based upon an infinite sense of brotherhood with toiling and struggling humanity, which He who most thoroughly accepted its conditions was fittest also to save. As Son of God Jesus looked upwards to the Father; as Son of Man, He looked outwards upon His brethren, the sheep who had no shepherd."

Enough has been said to show the missionary character of the teaching of Jesus. Here is

[1] Cp. Matt. viii. 20; Mark viii. 31.

a message of world-wide application, related to the common needs and aspirations of humanity. To limit it in any way whatever is to destroy its soul, and to misinterpret the significance of Him who gave it.

SERVICE for humanity was the Law of the life of Jesus. " He went about doing good." He described the purpose which animated Him in the words " the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister (Matt. xx. 28). The spirit of His whole career was summed up in the washing of the disciples' feet in the Upper Room, when He undertook a work which was usually given to the lowest servant. He meant His disciples to imitate Him; " I have given you an example, that ye should also do as I have done to you " (John xiii. 15). This service included a care for the bodies of men as well as for their souls. He healed sickness and disease; He was the first Christian medical missionary. This spirit of unrestricted philanthropy or benevolence was a new thing in the world into which Christ came. " The selfishness of modern times exists in defiance of morality, in ancient times it was approved, sheltered, and even in part enjoined by

morality." [1] In the ancient world there was no "enthusiasm of humanity," and the temper of general benevolence was unknown.[2]

This habit of service for others sprang from three convictions or principles in our Lord's mind. (*a*) He was convinced that there was no one who could not be redeemed and lifted to a higher level of life. He saw the latent good in all men. Thus we find Him freely mixing with the outcasts of society, and enrolling a despised tax-gatherer in the ranks of His closest friends.[3] His treatment of Zacchæus,[4] and His parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in the temple [5] reveal the breadth of His sympathies, and His hatred of the temper which "set all others at naught." Was there ever a severer denunciation of the self-righteous and exclusive spirit than His words to the chief priests and elders: "Verily I say unto you that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you"? (Matt. xxi. 31). They knew their own wretchedness; they

[1] Seeley, *Ecce Homo*, p. 151, 5th ed.

[2] Some qualification would be needed in the case of the Old Testament and later Jewish morality; cp. Peake's *Brotherhood in the Old Testament.*

[3] Luke v. 27–32. [4] Luke xix. 1–10.

[5] Luke xviii. 9–14.

were the " bruised reed " He must not break, the " smoking flax " He must fan into flame. (*b*) He saw that character grew by self-sacrifice, that life was enriched by service and self-denial. " If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. . . . For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life ? " (Matt. xvi. 24, 26). In the parable of the Sheep and Goats, the test applied in the day of judgment is not correctness of belief, but social service. The act of kindness done to one of the least of His brethren is done to Himself. Men are to see Him in the outcast and needy; nay, in each man they are to see a brother,[1] a child of the one Father in heaven. (*c*) He knew that the innermost nature of God was love, and love means self-giving, spending for others. It was to reveal God as love that He came. In serving their fellows men were making it possible for God's love to multiply itself; they were increasing the amount of spiritual energy in the world. This was the deepest root from which the service of Jesus sprang. His service was just the divine love in action.

[1] Matt. xxv. 31 ff.

Let us glance for a moment at the Prayers of Jesus. They are the best index to His temper of mind and soul. Prayer was the prevailing habit of His life; He would spend a whole night in prayer.[1] How could He serve His brethren unless He was in constant communion with His Father? To match the task there must be the power. Only a few prayers of Jesus are recorded, but these are full of significance. First, there are the prayers relating to other people. He prays that Peter's faith may "fail not."[2] On the Cross He prays that God will forgive His enemies.[3] In the great high-priestly prayer He prays for His disciples, and for those who shall be brought through them to a knowledge of truth, "that they all may be one."[4] A vision of unity fills His imagination. He sees growing results springing from His own perfect offering of Himself. The disciples are drawn into the circle of self-sacrifice; from them the influence spreads to others, till at last the

[1] Luke vi. 12, ix. 28; Mark i. 35, vi. 46.
[2] Luke xxii. 31, 32.
[3] Luke xxiii. 34.
[4] John xvii. Verse 1 seems to suggest that the prayer was spoken aloud. However great the element of idealizing in this Gospel, this prayer cannot have been a sheer invention of the writer.

world is won, and the divine purpose is accomplished. All differences vanish in a living, spiritual unity of reciprocal love. We may be sure that He never bade His followers pray for anything for which He did not Himself pray. Thus when He says, "Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth labourers into the harvest" (Matt. ix. 38), we get a glimpse into His missionary purpose. And St. Matthew preserves the context of this prayer; "and when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd." In the model prayer which He taught His disciples we note the universalism implied in "Our Father," the common Father of all men; and the prominent position given to the petition "Thy kingdom come." We are bidden pray first for that, before we ask anything for ourselves. Prayer, unless it is translated into service, loses half its meaning; and the prayer which lacks the element of intercession for others may easily become selfish.

Of the other prayers of Jesus, the prayer of thanksgiving at the success of the mission of the seventy is proof how dear to His

heart was the missionary cause. "In that same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father; for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight" (Luke x. 21). His whole soul goes out to God in thankful joy that simple villagers were beginning to understand the Father's love. Here was a message based upon the needs of the universal heart of humanity. He had come to deliver it in all its breadth and catholicity. In the triumph of the seventy He saw the promise of complete victory, "Satan fallen as lightning from heaven." The prayer in the hour of crisis in Gethsemane reveals the determining motive of His life. "Howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark xiv. 36), takes us back to the divine purpose as that which is the regulative factor in all human lives. We have a relative independence; "our wills are ours, we know not how." But "our wills are ours to make them Thine." If it is the divine purpose that all men should come to a knowledge of Christ, and if our lives are given to us as a trust to be used as instruments of God, all objections to

the principle of missionary activity are simply foolish.

The Cross was the culmination of Christ's life of service for humanity. We may study it in its missionary aspect without entering into any theological discussion of the doctrine of the Atonement. The first thing upon which we must insist is that in treading the road which led to the Cross Jesus experienced a spiritual strain, of which we can form little conception. The agony in the garden, when for a moment He asked that the cup might pass from Him, was only the crowning point of an agony which had been growing in His soul from the moment when He first realized that death awaited Him. We have no means of knowing how early the shadow of the Cross fell on His path. But one reason for thinking that it must have been there as a recognized possibility at the opening of His public career, is the fact that He had certainly studied the prophecies of the Suffering Servant in Second Isaiah. He was, as we can see from His quotations, completely at home in the Old Testament, upon which He must have deeply pondered while preparing for His work. There is evidence that He had adopted for Himself the rôle of the

Servant. He claimed Messiahship, but not the Messiahship of popular expectation. He said that He was to be a Messiah who must suffer and die. He transfigured the conception of the Messiah by blending with it the colours of the Servant.[1] May we not assume that the fact that the Christian Church quite early found in these Servant prophecies a reference to Christ, while the Jews of our Lord's time did not refer them to the Messiah, is to be explained by Christ's identification of Himself with the Suffering Servant? After St. Peter's confession of Him as Messiah at Cæsarea Philippi,[2] Jesus spoke openly to His disciples about His coming sufferings and death. He saw the Cross more clearly now; He saw that only by going to the extreme limits of self-sacrifice could God's redemptive purpose be accomplished. But He did not shrink from the ordeal. Through His death life would come to others.[3] The occasion of His death might be the gathering

[1] Cp. Mark xiv. 21, 49, "the Son of man goeth, even as it is written of him"; and at the arrest, "this is done that the scriptures might be fulfilled." Can this have any other reference than to the Servant's violent death in Isa. liii? Cp. also Luke xxii. 37.

[2] Matt. xvi. 13–20.

[3] Matt. xvi. 21–28; Mark viii. 27–38, x. 32–45.

hostility of the Jews; its cause lay deeper in the movement of a divine love, whose self-giving knew no limit. Two sayings of Jesus show that in His eyes there was a redemptive purpose in the Cross. One is the difficult saying that He had come "to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark x. 45). In whatever way we interpret "ransom," the statement, taken in connection with its context, shows that Jesus had the following kind of thought in His mind. The sons of Zebedee had just come to him asking for seats of honour in the Messianic kingdom. Jesus pointed out to them that the road to honour in that kingdom lay through suffering. He then enforces the lesson of the greatness of service; "whosoever would be first among you shall be servant of all." All His own life had been one of ministry to others. His death was to be a service. From it would flow a liberating influence. Life would spring from it. Many would be set free by it from the cramping fetters of sin and selfishness, and would become glad instruments of God's purpose.[1] Jesus clearly connects His death with the redemption of the world.

[1] John xii. 24, with its message of life out of death, is a good commentary on these words.

The other saying occurs in connection with the institution of the Last Supper. In St. Mark (xiv. 24) it runs, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many." St. Matthew (xxvi. 28) adds, "unto remission of sins."[1] The important word here is "covenant." We are taken back to the thought of covenant in the Old Testament, and to Jeremiah's prophecy of the new covenant which God would establish.[2] Fellowship is the idea which underlies covenant. God in making a covenant with Israel entered into fellowship with them; but they broke the covenant by their sinning and the fellowship was interrupted. Jeremiah looks forward to the framing of a new and more spiritual covenant from which would result a closer fellowship with God. Jesus regards His approaching death as the ratification of the new covenant and the means of making it effective. Just as the older covenant was sealed with blood, so here His death was to be the divine seal of the new covenant. It witnessed to the unchanging character of

[1] Many regard this addition as a gloss. If so, it is a gloss in absolute accord with the spirit of the passage.

[2] xxxi. 31–34.

God's love, to the lengths which that love was prepared to go in seeking to save man. And from it a new fellowship of man with God would result. Men would be drawn to God when they realized the greatness of the divine love. They would see sin in its true nature, as a wounding of God's heart of love, and in shame and repentance would climb back into a restored fellowship with God.

The drawing of the Cross! We may speculate as we will upon the Atonement. The fact of the Cross is far larger than any theory of it which we can frame. Christian experience testifies to the power of the Cross to draw men to the Saviour. "If God so loves me that He gave His Son to live and die for me, the least I can do is to respond to that love, die to sin, and live a life of service for others." So runs the argument in many a heart. The Cross has world-wide significance. If God be what Jesus on the Cross showed Him to be, will anyone assert that Jesus did not mean that revelation to be made known to all men?

Jesus founded a society which we call the Christian Church. He also proclaimed the coming of the Kingdom of God. The Church

and the Kingdom are not identical. The latter is a wider conception than the former,[1] and includes forms of association to which the name " Church " is not strictly applicable. Some have maintained that because the word " *ecclesia* " (=Church) occurs only twice in the Gospels, and only in St. Matthew's Gospel,[2] which is suspected of containing later ecclesiastical additions, we have no real evidence that Jesus did found a Church. But there can be no question that He collected a band of disciples, trained them, sent them out to preach, and contemplated the continued existence of His society. Nor is there really any sufficient reason for rejecting the passages in St. Matthew. " Wherever we find disciples and discipleship in the Gospels, there we are dealing with what was a direct preparation for the founding of the Ecclesia."[3] But though Jesus founded a Church He said very little about its organization. Questions of ecclesiastical polity or government He left alone. He merely bequeathed to His society two sacraments, one of initiation into the society, the other of fellowship. The

[1] Cp. Hort's *The Christian Ecclesia*, pp. 18, 19.
[2] xvi. 18, 19, xviii. 15–17.
[3] Hort, *op. cit.*, pp. 19, 20.

tie which was to bind the members of the society together was the tie of love and service. Loyalty to Himself was to bear fruit in brotherhood with each other. Just because Jesus put emphasis, not upon outward organization, but upon character and brotherliness, thus giving universal range to moral principles, it is clear that He was setting up a society which He intended to include all men. Seeley calls it the "Universal Republic." The Church may exist under different forms of organization. The very genius of Christianity lends itself to diverse expressions, just as the life principle working in different environments produces a varied wealth of organic forms.

Let us note, in conclusion, how the Person of Jesus is essentially missionary, in the sense that He attracts, inspires, illuminates, whenever men come into sufficiently close contact with Him to understand the appeal which He makes. Among the Notes at the end of Hort's Hulsean Lectures, *The Way, the Truth, and the Life*, occurs this striking paragraph:

"The antithesis 'I' and 'The Way' is the pregnant paradox which knits existence together. On the one hand, devotion to a

person, human or divine, seems in our best moments the all in all of life. Yet it fades and becomes an unreality or a disease when it is not translated into wide and diffusive operation: conversely all worlds of operation fatigue and desolate and come to vanity. In our finiteness we are driven to oscillate between the person and the world, whatever world it may be. But Christ's word exhibits them as meeting in Him. He, the most personal of persons, is also the dominating centre of every world. Most of all is this true of Him as the Way, apparently the most impersonal of all conceptions." [1]

Two great thoughts, among many others, underlie this passage. (*a*) There is, first, the power of Christ to consecrate every way of life which is not evil. And the point is this, that if once a man brings his work to Christ to be consecrated, bringing himself too, he finds within himself a dynamic power which simply must expand. If Christ can do this for him, and he realizes it and lives in the enthusiasm and gladness of it, he must want to help others to draw from the same well of life. There are selfish Christians, but they are not really Christians. Missionary

[1] p. 200.

effort in its broadest sense is involved in the very relation which Christ's Person bears to our own. (*b*) Secondly, there is the power of Christ to meet human need. It is not only "I am the way," but "I am *your* way." Christ is universal enough to meet the peculiar needs of us all. We are each one unique; yet our uniqueness is not outside His reach. And "the way," which suggests breadth and variety—different tasks for different people—suggests also narrowness. It is a "narrow way." We come face to face with the deep, spiritual unrest in the human heart, with the conscience which "makes cowards of us all," with moral shame and remorse at wrong things done in the past, with the craving for something which abides, the craving for an Eternal Friend. The whole of that spiritual need Christ meets. Only a person can meet the needs of a person. Here is a Person who does it. His very power to do it is a challenge to make Him known everywhere.

It is the characteristic of personality to impress itself upon others, to draw others into its circle. This, of course, is very marked in the history of the great teachers of religion, Buddha, Mohammed, Confucius.

The greatness of personality largely consists in its ability to establish relations with a manifold variety of people. Here in Jesus Christ is the supreme example of that power. In Him we see God's purpose for mankind. God wants His own expansive personality, expressed in Jesus, so to widen that the whole of humanity shall be brought within the range of its influence.

In discussing the missionary significance of this Gospel we need not concern ourselves with the vexed problem of its authorship, upon which the last word has not yet been said. Far more important is the purpose of the Gospel, the aim which the writer set before himself and the manner in which he carries it out. As we study his purpose we shall see how completely missionary in spirit the book is. In no other New Testament writing is Jesus Christ more plainly set forth as the universal Saviour and the light and life of the world.

The purpose of the writer is given in the following words: "But these [signs] are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (xx. 31). The purpose is both dogmatic and practical. The writer wants to show that Jesus is God Incarnate. He is the Christ, the Anointed One or Messiah, the Fulfiller of the long past of the Old Testament; but He is more. He is the Son of God, standing in vital relation-

ship, not only to Judaism, but to the life of all humanity. No lesser word than "Son of God" will adequately describe Him. The practical aim of the writer is to vindicate Christian experience. The Gospel is to be dated somewhere between the years A.D. 90–110. For two generations Christian experience had been growing. Disciples had committed themselves in trust to Christ, and had found that He gave them life. They had experienced the power of His Spirit. This trust was not illusory. Christ was in very truth the Life-Giver. All might receive life from Him.

The Gospel, though it contains much historical matter whose value is being increasingly recognized, is less a history than an interpretation of the Person and work of Christ. It is composed in a definitely theological interest. Its main theme is the Person of Jesus Christ, His origin and relation to God, to the society of believers, and to the world which refused to recognize His claim. It comes straight from the heart of the writer's living experience of Christ's power. It is a Gospel of life.[1]

[1] Drummond's words in *The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel* are worth quoting (pp. 26–27):

The importance of the author's purpose will be more clearly understood if we think of the circumstances under which he wrote. It was a time of great anxiety for the Christian society. There were dangers without and within. The Christian religion was yet young. It was confronted with the world of Græco-Asiatic thought. Gnostic tendencies were beginning to show themselves. Would the religion preserve its purity, or would it be contaminated by contact with this mixed culture? And within the Church there was unrest. There had been an eager expectation of a speedy Second Coming of Christ, but the years passed by, and Christ did not come. Were the hopes of the Christian misplaced? Had they been deceived? We can imagine the writer saying to himself, "I must meet this perplexing situation. I will do so by presenting

"Such was this 'theologian' as the ancients called him; not the framer of bare dogmas, not the architect of a system, not the disputer of this world, but one who saw the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man, who walked with the rapt face of one whose faith had subdued the world, and who, out of the depths of his loving heart, told, not only to his own generation, but to generations far distant in time and country, where he had found the secret of eternal life."

Christianity in a new light. I will penetrate to the spiritual heart of the religion, and set it forth as the one, universal, spiritual religion, with the Person of Jesus Christ as its centre. I will show Him as the Saviour and the Life-Giver for all humanity against the background of the Spirit, who progressively makes plain to those who have eyes to see the meaning of His coming." In the execution of his purpose the writer frees Christianity from its primitive Jewish setting,[1] presents it in wider and more spiritual form, and launches his craft upon the wide ocean of human thought, sure that, with the Spirit as pilot, it will weather all the storms it may meet.[2] One of the key thoughts of the Gospel is that of the Spirit as a real and present guide. He is the Spirit of Truth,

[1] The Parousia or Second Coming hardly has a place in the Gospel. For it the coming in the Spirit at Pentecost is substituted. Christ is always coming in the writer's thought. He comes in conscience, in the crises of history, in all the experiences which happen to us. For a discussion of the passages in which a reference to the Parousia seems to be made (xiv. 3, 18, 23, xvi. 16, 22, xxi. 22, etc.) see Stevens's *The Johannine Theology*, ch. xiv.

[2] For an admirable account of the purpose of the Gospel, see the Dean of St. Paul's essay, "The Theology of the Fourth Gospel" in *Cambridge Biblical Essays*. I am indebted to this essay for suggestions.

who will lead the Church into all truth. He mediates to men the saving power of Jesus. He brings the eternal into time, makes the ideal real, so that men may have eternal life here and now. The mind of the writer moves naturally in the region of the ideal. Hence his use of symbolism. His is "the utterance of one of those rare souls who speak with timeless voice to the permanent needs of man." [1] What if he has idealized and amplified many of the sayings of Jesus? Does it matter? The Spirit had been teaching him all that Jesus meant. It is more important that we should have his Spirit-given interpretation of this meaning than that we should know the exact words which Jesus uttered.[2] If ever a man was inspired it was this writer. Is not his Gospel the favourite book of most Christians?

It would need a volume to do justice to the message of this book. I can touch only on a point or two. Let us begin with considering the writer's presentation of God.

The Prologue in the first chapter exhibits God as essentially Self-revealing in nature. Christ the Word is the revelation of the divine character. But this Word was "in

[1] Drummond, *op. cit.*, p. 23. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 41.

the beginning with God." That is, there was eternally in God One who as Son was the expression of the Father. To express Himself, to enter into relationships, to go out from Himself in love towards Another belongs to the very being of God. The Word is the agent of creation; "all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that hath been made." Through the Word the Self-revealing character of God is manifested in the sphere of time and history. This Word or Utterance of God was "the light of men." All men, though they knew it not, were receiving illumination from Him. The revelation was progressive. "From the first He was (so to speak) on His way to the world, advancing towards the Incarnation by preparatory revelations." [1] Finally, "the Word became flesh" in the Person of Jesus Christ, "and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only-begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." The writer throughout the Gospel is at pains to emphasize both terms in the sentence "the *Word* became *flesh*." It was a real human nature which He took. Jesus is brought before us a true human being, with a bodily organism which could feel weariness and a

[1] Westcott, *Gospel of St. John*, p. 7, note.

heart which could feel sorrow.[1] The writer at every turn challenges Docetism, or the doctrine that the humanity of Jesus was not real, but only appearance. But He who became man was the Eternal Word, the story of whose life does not begin with the birth at Bethlehem, but has no beginning. And throughout the narrative the emphasis is upon His Godhead. The humanity is a veil through which the deity is continually shining.[2] Thus the coming of Jesus Christ was the culmination of God's perpetual Self-revelation. In Him the world was to see the innermost character of God, the character of One whose nature was love, and who by a divine necessity must enter into relationships of love with others. This is essentially a missionary presentation of God. Our minds are lifted to the thought of a great Spirit of love and reason who in all creation, but most markedly in human personality, is seeking to express Himself and to form channels through which His spiritual activity may flow.

God is Spirit (iv. 24), and hence essentially

[1] Cp. iii. 6, xi. 35.

[2] Thus the miracles are "signs." Jesus is represented as having superhuman knowledge (i. 48); is conscious of His pre-existence (viii. 58); acts on His own initiative (ii. 4, vi. 6, xi. 6); voluntarily chooses to die (x. 18).

creative. And God is Love, loving the Son from all eternity; "the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (iii. 35); loving the world, and because of that love sending the Son for the world's redemption (iii. 16); manifesting His love in special manner to those who love Him; "if a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (xiv. 23).

Life and *Light* are two of the great words of this Gospel; and both are applied to God. God is "the living Father" (vi. 57), who has "life in himself" (v. 26). This life He gave to the Son, who thus also has "life in himself" (v. 26), and so can be the source of life for the world; "in him was life; and the life was the light of men" (i. 4). The Work of Jesus in giving life to men is thus rooted in the essential nature of God. Life carries with it the idea of growth, expansion, self-propagation. God's gift of physical life is manifested in creation in the most amazing variety and richness of form. Is His higher gift of spiritual life in Christ to be limited to any one section of humanity?

God is Light. He is not directly called Light in the Gospel as He is in the First

Epistle of St. John; [1] but since Jesus is the "effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance" (Heb. i. 3), and is expressly described as "the true light" (i. 9), and calls Himself "the light of the world" (viii. 12), we are justified in speaking of God as Light. What ideas does this image of light suggest? First, that of self-manifestation; secondly, that of revealing the uses and purposes of things; thirdly, as we think of the sunrise, that of a splendour which grows and brightens. The writer bids us see in Jesus God's Self-manifestation; the purpose for which men were created, that they might become "sons of light" (xii. 36), reflecting the pure and loving intention of God; and a light for all men, an illumination which would increase in extent, as the Spirit through the ages made known the meaning of the Incarnation.

In this Gospel Christ is presented as "the way, and the truth, and the life" (xiv. 6), but of these the last is the word with richest meaning. To give life to men was the great purpose of Christ's coming. In giving men life Christ gives Himself; the gift is not detachable from His Person; it is the in-

[1] 1 John, i. 5. The Epistle is almost certainly by the same author.

fusion of His own Personality into the lives of men. Jesus speaks of Himself as the bread of life.[1] Bread has to be assimilated by the system, if it is to sustain. By assimilation the material particles of the wheat become bone and muscle; there is a continuous process of transformation. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me" (xv. 4). One life flows through the whole vine, binding all its parts into a living whole. Even so by fellowship with Christ believers are made one with Him and with each other. Eternal life is the result of this union. The emphasis is not upon the endlessness of the life, but upon its spiritual quality. A man may have, at any rate in germ, eternal life here and now. Its quality, and the fact that it depends on the Living Christ, is a guarantee of its permanence.[2] "And this *is* life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ" (xvii. 3).

The secret of life remains hidden, and so there is a vagueness and mystery about the word. But it is not difficult to see what this teaching about Christ as the Life-Giver

[1] vi. 35, 51.

[2] xiv. 19, "because I live, ye shall live also."

means. It means that a heightening of man's ordinary powers and capacities is possible. Christ can enable a man to do what he could not do by himself, whether in the way of resistance to evil, or in the way of constructive achievement. Personality is to be measured by its possibilities. Christ's gift of life quickens the natural development of human nature, and sets it on a path of service which results in continuous growth. When we look out upon the world, whether the world of heathendon, or the so-called Christian world at home, and see how capacities are running to waste for want of an ideal, and how sin in its manifold forms is perverting the true development of human nature, we realize the greatness of the appeal which Christ makes. Vast tracts of arid land can be made fertile by bringing to them water from the hills. Here is the water of life available for all humanity; but Christ's gift must be distributed by the hands of men.

We notice the emphasis which Jesus puts upon the life-giving quality of His sayings: "it is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life" (vi. 63). The words are spirit; that is, belong to the spiritual realm, tell of spiritual

things, wake a response in those whose spiritual capacities are not dulled. Speech is the utterance of personality. The words of Christ the Word are charged, as no other words are charged, with life; and this is notably the case with the sayings attributed to Him in this Gospel. We feed on Christ in many ways, not least by dwelling on His words, and letting their spirit mould our wills and characters.

The coming of Christ is presented by the writer as a challenge to the world. Light and darkness, death and life, stand in sharp contrast with each other. So, both in the Gospel and the First Epistle, the "world" and the society of believers are set in contrast.[1] This ethical dualism is characteristic of the writer's thought. The Incarnation is the "crisis" or test. Christ judges men, just because He has come. The supreme purpose of His coming was to save men; "God sent not the Son into the world to judge the world; but that the world should be saved through him" (iii. 17). But "this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were

[1] 1 John ii. 15–17, iii. 1, 13; St. John xvii. 14, xii. 31, viii. 23.

evil" (iii. 19). Light is of necessity a revealer; the presentation of the truth inevitably judges between those who accept and those who reject it. Judgment is pictured as a continuous process. Day by day men are making for themselves their own heaven or hell, and the final judgment will be but the completion of the process.[1]

A century or more ago appeal was made for foreign missions on the ground that the heathen, if unconverted, perished in hell. To-day no such appeal is possible. How can a just God judge men who have never heard of Christ by the standard of Christian truth? But it cannot be argued that it were better to leave the heathen in their ignorance, than bring them to the light and expose them to the risk of rejecting it. To say that is to forget the divine purpose of love. Though the note of judgment sounds through this Gospel it is everywhere subordinate to the clearer note of love. The Incarnation was an act of divine love. God longs to call men into fellowship with Himself. In Jesus Christ is the revelation of God's character.

[1] xii. 48. For a discussion of the seeming inconsistency between passages where Jesus says that He has not come to judge the world, and passages where He claims to be judge, see Stevens's *The Johannine Theology*, ch. xiv.

The metaphysical basis of Christianity is a saving love universal in its scope.

In this Gospel occur two of the three missionary visions of Jesus; for so we may truly call them. The vision not recorded here is that at the Temptation, when "the devil taketh him unto an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and he said unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me" (Matt. iv. 8, 9). "All the kingdoms of the world," His rightful possession; but they could be won only along the road of absolute loyalty to the right, only through pain and self-sacrifice. At the opening of His public ministry Christ settled the principles upon which He was to do His work. It was a world-wide work, embracing the whole of humanity; but it must be done in God's way, which is ever a way of love, never of force or of compromise with evil. The second missionary vision is contained in the words, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (xii. 32). The occasion was the coming of certain Greeks to the feast. They came to Philip and asked to see Jesus. When Jesus heard of it He said, "The hour is come that the Son

of man should be glorified." It was His glory that the Gospel should be preached to the Gentiles. In these Greeks He saw the beginning of that extension of His kingdom which was the longing of His heart. And then His thought reaches forward to the Cross. Life out of death is the divine law. The grain of wheat must fall into the earth and shed its husk before it can produce fruit. A man must lose his life in service and self-sacrifice if he is to find it.[1] His own self-giving was moving to its climax; but the Cross would prove itself the most powerful instrument for winning the world. There is no limitation. His death was to be for all men. He sees Himself on the Cross as the world's great spiritual magnet. Was He wrong in His estimate of the power of the Cross? Let missionary experience give the answer.

The third vision is that of the "other sheep." "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd" (x. 16). The whole passage is exquisite in its tenderness. The shepherd "knows" his sheep, goes before them, calls them by name, leads

[1] xii. 23, 24.

them to pasture, and finally gives His life for them. God's love cares for the individual soul, is a discriminating love. Just because each child is unique the Father trains him in a unique way. But all the sheep belong to one flock or fellowship. Out there in the wide world beyond Palestine Jesus sees a vast, unshepherded multitude. They are His—"other sheep *I* have." They must be gathered in. They may be put in different folds, but they belong to the same flock. There is a spiritual unity which lies deeper than the religious or racial divisions among men.[1] There is a common humanity, a common Sonship, for there is only one Father in heaven. We are admitted here into the very heart of Jesus, the great missionary. We see, as we saw in the last verse of Jonah, divine compassion brooding over the world; only the vision is clearer and more intense, because the divine compassion is personalized in Jesus. Here is the love of God in concrete, historical form. Here is God in Jesus reaching out hands of love to men without distinction of race or creed.

[1] Disastrous results for the unity of the Church have followed from the mistranslation "fold" instead of "flock" in ver. 16.

Chapter X — *The Acts of the Apostles*

THE missionary genius of Christianity is nowhere better exemplified than in this book, which records the early history of the Church between the years A.D. 30–60. The story is one of continuous growth and expansion. The religion of Jesus is seen coming into contact with very different cultures and social surroundings and proving its superiority. The mustard seed has begun to grow into a tree. The varied character of the narrative provides an almost inexhaustible mine of study for those who are interested in missionary work. Many of the outstanding problems which confront the missionary to-day are to be found in this brief record, together with the principles in the light of which these early pioneers tried to solve them; while through the whole story runs the unshaken conviction that the work which was being done was God's work, appointed by Him, directed by Him, its authors being merely instruments of the divine purpose, called to a task for

which in themselves they were hopelessly unfit, but which they dared to attempt because the Spirit gave them power.

The history is fragmentary and incomplete; many things are left out which we should like to know. But St. Luke had a definite plan in writing, which becomes clear as we study the narrative. His main object was to trace in outline the expansion of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome the capital of the empire. The scene is at first laid in Jerusalem (i.–vii.). Then, as the result of the persecution which arose after the death of Stephen, the religion spreads to Samaria, and through Judæa and Galilee, and to Cæsarea (viii.–xi. 18). It reaches Antioch, which becomes a new missionary centre (xi. 18–30, xiii. 1–3). Its expansion is then traced in various provinces of the empire, Galatia, Macedonia, Asia, Achaia (xiii.–xxi.). Finally the Gospel is taken to Rome (xxviii.), where St. Luke leaves St. Paul a prisoner. The apostle was tried and acquitted, and continued his missionary work till his final arrest and execution (A.D. 64–65).[1] Some

[1] This is the only inference which can be drawn from the Pastoral Epistles, which cannot be fitted into the apostle's life before his imprisonment. To what extent they are from St. Paul's pen is uncertain.

have thought that, since Acts ends so abruptly, St. Luke intended to write another volume continuing the story of St. Paul's missionary labours. But it may well be that he intended only to revise the book, but was prevented from doing so by the violent persecution against the Christians which broke out in A.D. 64. The hypothesis of another volume is unnecessary, since, if it was the author's object to trace the spread of Christianity to Rome, that object is achieved in the present volume.[1]

Why was there this remarkable expansion of the religion? It is not enough to refer to the working of the divine Spirit, though in very truth this volume might be called *The Acts of the Spirit*,[2] for throughout it records the work of the Holy Spirit. But God acts through men, and we must try to discover on the human plane reasons for this extraordinary development. These reasons are not far to seek. They are to be found in an enrichment of the Church's Christology, and in a new conception of the scope of the Church itself.

[1] Cp. Furneaux's *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 415, and Rackham's *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. liv–v.

[2] Cp. Rackham, *op. cit.*, pp. lxxiv–v.

(*a*) Experience was needed to make plain to these early disciples all that was involved in the Person and work of Christ. In the speeches in the opening portion of Acts the Christology is implicit rather than explicit. St. Peter speaks of "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you" (ii. 22). He is the Messiah,[1] and God's Servant,[2] and the Prince of Life.[3] The chief event to which the apostles were called to bear witness was the Resurrection. That and the Crucifixion formed the main subjects of their preaching.[4] But through all this early teaching runs a note of gladness, based upon the assurance of forgiveness, and the expectation of the speedy coming of the Messianic kingdom.[5] We see, as it were, the fuller Christology trembling on the verge of expression, like a bud half opened which needs only a few hours of sunshine to expand it into the perfect flower. As the primitive Church reflected upon the significance of the Resurrection and upon the new tide of life which had come to it at Pentecost, it quickly

[1] ii. 32–36. [2] iii. 13. [3] iii. 15.
[4] ii. 23, 24, 32, iii. 15, v. 30, 31. [5] iii. 19–21.

realized that no lower title than God could be given to Jesus. An Incarnation of God must have a world-wide bearing.

(*b*) Practical difficulties within the Church helped to bring out the full implications of the Incarnation. These practical difficulties related to the admission of the Gentiles into the Church. The mission sent out by the Church at Antioch had been a great success (xiv. 26, 27). But the Christian Jews at Jerusalem were uneasy. Had the Jewish ceremonial law no permanent character? Were Gentiles to be admitted to full membership in the Church without first accepting the Mosaic ordinances? If so, then Judaism would be relegated to the position of a sectarian creed and its distinctive features would be lost in a rapidly expanding Gentile Church.[1] A conference was held at Jerusalem to discuss the matter. St. Paul constitutes himself the champion of the Gentiles, and wins the day. To him more than to anyone else is due the fact that the Church thus early in its career broke away from Jewish sectarianism, and became the Church universal. St. Peter, with the memory of his mission to Cornelius

[1] Cp. Furneaux, *op. cit.*, p. 227.

fresh in his mind, ranges himself on the side of St. Paul. The evidence of accomplished facts was too strong. God gave the Gentiles the Holy Spirit. "And he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith" (xv. 9). SS. Paul and Barnabas could point to the results of their first missionary journey (xv. 12). What conclusion could be drawn but that the message of Christ and His salvation was of universal application? The conference decides that Gentiles may be admitted freely to the Church, provided certain *moral*, not ceremonial, obligations are observed (xv. 29).[1] As a result of this decision the Church, under the leadership of St. Paul, was able to extend its borders and to prove that its message was a message for humanity.

In the Acts we see Christianity in operation. The seed grows before our eyes, and in different soils. One of the chief interests of the story is to note the varied character of the surroundings with which the young religion found itself in contact. There can,

[1] Idolatry, fornication and murder are the three things forbidden. As Harnack has shown, there is no reference to ceremonial observances; cp. his *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 250–263.

I think, be little doubt that St. Luke in selecting the materials for his history, deliberately chose incidents which would demonstrate that in Christianity alone was the truth to be found. Thus, for instance, he mentions several cases in which the Gospel proves its superiority over magic and superstition. The defeat of Elymas, the exposure of Simon Magus, the scene with the girl with the spirit of divination at Philippi, the victory of Christianity over superstition at Ephesus, are all intended to show that the religion of Jesus has no rival.[1] The missionary of to-day has the same battle to fight with magic and false beliefs, and can witness to similar victories won by Christ. Or take St. Paul at Athens. The success attending his efforts was here much less,[2] but the lesson is the same, that philosophy is no rival to Christian truth.

St. Paul's speech at Athens provides an interesting study in missionary methods of teaching. We see him trying to discover in the religion of those to whom he is going to preach, points of contact with the new truth he is about to expound. He makes use

[1] xiii. 4–12, viii. 9–24, xvi. 16–18, xix. 13–20.
[2] xvii. 32–34.

of the altar to an Unknown God, which he had seen in the city. He quotes from a Greek poet,[1] who had described men as the offspring of God. He adopts the same method at Lystra, appealing to his audience to reflect on the significance of their own belief that the crops were the gift of some superior power.[2] Which of the two methods is the better, for a missionary to start by telling the heathen that their beliefs are entirely wrong and that they must discard them all, or for him to seek for the germ of truth which is there in all religions, and upon that to build the larger truth? "I came not to destroy, but to fulfil," said Jesus. Christianity is the crown and complement of all the partial and imperfect truth which exists anywhere. Whatever is vital and of worth in any religion is taken up and made more vital in the comprehensiveness of Christianity.

Perhaps the chief value of this book is

[1] The words are found in both Cleanthes and Aratus.

[2] It has been suggested that the words in xiv. 17 are a fragment of verse. "If a religious festival was being celebrated, it would be characteristic of Paul, with his happy knack of utilizing the circumstances of the moment, to quote the words from a lyric hymn which had just been sung as the procession moved to the temple" (Furneaux, *op. cit.*, p. 222).

found in the insight which it gives us into Christian motive, into the real dynamic power of the religion. It is called the Acts of the *Apostles*. The word "Apostle" means "one who is sent," a commissioned person, entrusted by God with a special work. No one can read the book without noticing how at every turn the action of the Apostles is taken in dependence on the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Philip is sent by the Spirit to speak to the Ethiopian,[1] Peter is sent to Cornelius.[2] Saul and Barnabas are sent out by the Church at Antioch only in obedience to the call of the Spirit.[3] Paul comes to Troas, with Europe facing him over the water, because the Spirit directs him.[4] The Spirit tells him that "bonds and afflictions" await him.[5] The whole story throbs with intense spiritual life. It witnesses to the reality of Christianity as a *life*, and of discipleship as the receiving of power and guidance from God. Upon the infant Church at Pentecost came a rich experience of new life, which we see reflected in their glad sense of fellowship, and in their conviction that for the task which awaited

[1] viii. 29. [2] x. 19, 20. [3] xiii. 2.
[4] xvi. 6–8. [5] xx. 23, xxi. 11.

them supplies of divine strength were available. In that conviction they went forward to their work, and the event justified their faith. They were guided, were sustained, did receive power from above.

If the Acts of the Apostles may be called the Acts of the Spirit, it may equally be called the *Acts of Jesus Christ;*[1] for behind all the story lies the belief that Jesus was still alive, carrying out His work of redemption, sharing His life with men. The first verse of the book speaks of "all that Jesus began both to do and to teach," implying that His work was not finished when He left the earth. The last verse shows us St. Paul at Rome "teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ." The Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, whose work is to witness to Christ and to interpret Him to the world. The range of the Spirit's influence is universal. Wherever there is a human heart He seeks to inspire and illuminate it. The ascended Christ knows no limitations. The salvation brought by Jesus is meant for all men. And this book shows us the free course of the grace of God. Cornelius, a Roman Centurion; the Philippian jailer; the Ethiopian eunuch;

[1] Cp. Rackham, p. xxvii.

Lydia, the seller of purple dye; an Athenian councillor; Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue at Corinth—all these found that Christ was "the power of God and the wisdom of God."

The gift of the Spirit at Pentecost showed itself in a glad feeling of fellowship, and took practical expression in a communism which was only possible in a small society.[1] But the spirit which underlay that communism is the essential spirit of Christianity. As we read St. Paul's Epistles we cannot but be struck with the real brotherhood and unity which marked the life of the local churches. They had caught something of St. Paul's spirit of self-sacrifice, which he in turn had caught from his Master. In his speech at Miletus to the Ephesian elders he records a saying of Jesus, not recorded elsewhere, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (xx. 35). St. Paul made it his definite aim to preserve the unity of the Church. The local churches ought to feel that they were parts of a larger whole. There was but one body, of which all were members. In order to make this unity a reality, and not a mere sentiment, he took great trouble over the

[1] ii. 44, 45.

collection made in the different churches for the poorer members of the Church at Jerusalem.[1] That St. Paul was influenced in this matter of unity by the unity of the Roman Empire is certain. Why could he not achieve in the spiritual sphere what Rome had achieved in the sphere of government? There was a vast political unity before his eyes, with peace established throughout the Empire, and a growing volume of trade passing along the great roads. All was under the rule of a single emperor.[2] Was there not a greater kingdom than that of Rome, the kingdom of God, with a citizenship open to all, and not restricted, as was full Roman citizenship, to a privileged few? Its King, Jesus Christ, wielded a wider sovereignty than did any Cæsar; its unity was closer, being based on love and brotherhood. To lay firmly the foundations of this heavenly kingdom, to plant it in the Roman Empire, to take the Gospel to Rome itself, the imperial capital, was St. Paul's aim. In that aim he succeeded in the most marvellous way. For breadth of vision, Christian statesmanship, and the practical gifts which make

[1] xxiv. 17; cp. 2 Cor. ix.
[2] Cp. Rackham, pp. lv.–lix.

a good missionary he stands without a rival.

Many other lessons of importance for missionary work may be gathered from this history. The Acts throws light upon problems of the internal organization of a growing Church, the relation of daughter churches to the mother Church, the ministry of women, who take a prominent place in the missionary work of St. Paul. And the interest of the story carries the reader breathlessly along. Shipwreck, riots, arrests and trials, hairbreadth escapes, all provide material for missionary teaching. The words which Tennyson puts into the mouth of Ulysses are pre-eminently true of St. Paul.

> " For always roaming with a hungry heart
> Much have I seen and known; cities of men
> And manners, climates, councils, governments,
> Myself not least, but honour'd of them all."

Only the apostle would not have uttered the sentiments in the last line. He called himself " the least of all the saints." It was only the " grace given " him which enabled him to do what he did. As we study his life and read this story of the spread of Christianity, we can only feel that the power

of God was behind and in the movement; and in that fact we may see the pledge that one day the kingdoms of this world will become, what they are in principle and by right, the kingdom of Christ.

We have constantly to remember that these Epistles are not in the first instance theological treatises, but personal letters of a missionary to his converts, called out by the passing circumstances of the hour. Thus, for example, the letter to the Church at Philippi, so full of hope and affection, was written when Epaphroditus arrived with a gift for the apostle from the Philippians;[1] that to Corinth, because he hears that there are divisions in the Church and because the Corinthians have sent to him asking his advice in some difficulties;[2] that to Philemon, because Philemon's runaway slave had come to him. Professor Deissmann, in his recent valuable book *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul*, protests that the scholars of the nineteenth century have tended to lose Paul, the man and the missionary, in Paul the theologian. He has been transferred "from

[1] ii. 25–30, iv. 18.
[2] 1 Cor. i. 11, vii. 1, viii. 1.

the sphere of vital religion into the sphere of theology, which, while it is not quite foreign to him, is obviously secondary." [1] If, he says, we could read a modern treatise on Paulinism to Paul's converts at Corinth or Thessalonica " we should bring them all into the condition of Eutychus of Troas, the one man who managed to sleep while Paul was speaking." [2] We are apt to forget that the first Christians were almost entirely drawn from the class of the slaves or the very poor. They could not have understood anything but a very simple teaching. St. Paul was a tent-maker, and his friends were for the most part to be found among those who worked with their hands. " Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called " (1 Cor. i. 26).

The letters vividly reveal the man; they are alive with his personality. We can almost hear him rapidly dictating them, breaking off at times without finishing a sentence, passing from one subject to another, struggling to express the thoughts which came surging into his mind, now dealing with the highest themes of speculation, now giving practical

[1] English trans. by W. E. Wilson, p. 155 (Hodder and Stoughton). [2] *Ibid.*, p. 154.

advice on some quite homely matter, or sending an affectionate greeting to an absent friend. But, despite their occasional character, these letters have a unity, for they are the outcome of a mind whose growth had been shaped by a few luminous convictions. St. Paul was quite sure about certain fundamental truths, and it is these which he sets out in his letters, coming to them from different angles, and reiterating them with the varying emphasis which the occasion required. These truths he had lived out; he had tested them in his own experience, of which the letters are a living transcript. When he is obscure, it is not because his mind is unclear; it is because he sees the largeness of truth, and realizes that he has not the words to present it in its fullness. He leaves his margins, if I may so put it, shifting and uncertain, content if his centre is fixed. In reading his letters, then, we must remember that they are the letters of a missionary written in the thick of his work, not written for publication, but growing out of his work and reflecting his moods of joy, and hope, and despondency, his fears, anxieties, and triumphant certainties.

1. St. Paul's first certainty is that the

Cross of Christ spells man's salvation, and this in two ways. It was an act of God by which He dealt with human sin in such a manner that a new road of access to God was opened up.[1] It supplied also the motive power for Christian living.[2] To die with Christ to sin and selfishness, and through that daily dying to rise to new life, was the Christian's aim. All the letters emphasize the importance of the Cross, but we best see what the Cross meant to the apostle in practical life by a study of the two letters to the Church at Corinth. He came to Corinth, disappointed at his want of success at Athens, "determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2). He had to cope with many difficulties at Corinth, party spirit, the marriage question, the eating of meat offered in sacrifice to idols, gross immorality, the value of various orders of spiritual gifts; he solves them all in the light of the Cross, which thus proved itself to be "the power of God"

[1] Rom. v. 1–11, viii. 3; 2 Cor. v. 18–21; Gal. iii. 13; Eph. ii. 15, 16; Col. i. 19–22, and many other passages.

[2] Rom. viii. 1–13, xii. 1; 2 Cor. iv. 10, v. 17, xii. 9, 10; Eph. v. 1–5.

(1. i. 18).[1] We can trace the working of his thought. If the Cross was a reconciling act, should there be division among Christians? Division violates the principle of love exemplified in the Cross. The Cross was an act of self-sacrifice for the good of humanity. Do not the claims of the larger whole supersede the narrower interests of a section? Does not the Cross call to service? The Cross is the indictment of sin and the witness to the primacy of the spiritual. Can one for whom Christ died continue in sin? The Cross was followed by the Resurrection, and a new power of life came into the world. In the Cross each one can find the hope and encouragement he needs for the new start: the Crucified Christ is the Ascended Christ. In this kind of way St. Paul made use of his first certainty; preaching the Cross in the midst of a heathenism sunk in the depths of vice and superstition, creating wherever he went little groups of people to be centres of a diffusive, spiritual influence.

2. His second certainty was that Christ was alive and that men could be in living relationship with Him. "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but

[1] Cp. Findlay's *The Epistles of Paul the Apostle*, p. 82 ff.

Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). How often he uses the expression "in Christ"![1] What does he mean? He is trying to describe an experience; but no description can do justice to an experience. It must be lived through to be understood. There came to St. Paul on the Damascus road an experience of the power of the Living Christ. The whole of the rest of his life was a progressive exploration of that great spiritual experience.[2] It pleased God, he says, "to reveal his Son in me" (Gal. i. 16). *In* is the important word here. St. Paul was conscious of the indwelling of a spiritual power. Christ through the Spirit was possessing him, moulding him. There was a fusion of personalities. There was a mystical union, an imparting of life. His own personality, without losing its centre, found another centre in Christ.

How can such a statement as this, that he was in Christ and Christ in him, be tested? Are they the words of a dreamer or victim of self-deception? St. Paul has been regarded

[1] Deissmann, *op. cit.*, says: "The formula 'in Christ' (or 'in the Lord,' and so on) occurs one hundred and sixty-four times in Paul's letters" (p. 171). Part II of this book, "Communion with Christ in the Experience of Paul," should be carefully studied.

[2] Phil. iii. 12–14.

as a neurotic and a fanatic; but can such a charge be fairly maintained in face of his essential sanity, reasonableness and broad and statesmanlike outlook? Illusions are not as a rule permanent save in the case of madness, where the sufferer is removed from association with his fellows just because his illusion incapacitates him from leading the ordinary life of men. Festus called St. Paul mad,[1] but St. Paul's life is the best commentary on his defence: "I am not mad, most excellent Festus; but speak forth words of truth and soberness." If he was suffering from an illusion in saying that he received life from Christ, it was a strangely permanent illusion, which carried with it none of the weakening and disintegrating effects on conduct and personality which illusions usually have. Further, the illusion was shared by many others, which, again, is not a characteristic of illusions proper. It was not only in St. Paul that Christ proved this indwelling power. St. Paul led hundreds into the same experience.[2]

It should also be noticed that the apostle

[1] Acts xxvi. 24, 25.

[2] For an interesting discussion of the question whether auto-suggestion can account for Christian experience see *Christian Experience and Psychological Processes* by Rouse and Miller (Student Christian Movement).

distinguished between the appearance on the Damascus road and other visionary experiences which came to him.[1] He insists that "he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him" (Acts ix. 27). He bases his right to be an apostle on the fact.[2] He was well aware of the difference between his own permanent and growing experience of Christ's indwelling and various phases of mystical excitement. His sane discussion of speaking with tongues proves how balanced was his judgment.[3]

No; "Christ in us" represents a fact of Christian experience, testified to by the Christian consciousness all down the ages. Nor is the witness to the fact merely internal and psychological. There is the evidence of changed lives. "And such were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. vi. 11). How St. Paul's heart must have thrilled as he wrote those words! Corinth, a by-word for wickedness even in the pagan world; and yet in it a growing band of men and women whom Christ was lifting out of their old life into a new life of

[1] 2 Cor. xii. [2] 1 Cor. i. 9.
[3] Deissmann, *op. cit.*, deals with this, pp. 246–251.

union with Himself. As we read these missionary letters we are taken into a scene where theological discussions seem of secondary importance; we are put down into the middle of a battle-field, where good and evil fight for the souls of men, where the Spirit of Christ is striving to recreate a fallen human nature, where under the influence of Christ personalities are being redeemed every day. The realm of spiritual realities does not always lend itself to precise measurement by the narrower logical understanding.

3. Just because St. Paul's religion was so intensely alive and he himself was growing daily in knowledge of Christ, his theology remains fluid. This does not mean that he had no fixed truths which he clearly apprehended; but it means that he did not set them out in systematic form, and when he wrote about them he used a variety of phrases, not all of which convey quite the same meaning. In particular he does not always distinguish clearly between the Living Christ and the Holy Spirit.[1] How could he?

[1] 2 Cor. iii. 17. In Gal. v. 22–25 they that "are of Christ Jesus" are they who "live by the Spirit"; cp. Rom. viii. 9, 10, where "the Spirit of God," "the Spirit of Christ" and "Christ" are used as practically equivalent terms; Gal. iv. 6.

How can we? Let us remember again that he was writing as a missionary engaged in the practical work of winning souls for Christ. What is more natural than that he should at times speak of Christ, and at other times of the Holy Spirit, as transforming men? Can we in point of fact distinguish between the work of the two persons of the Sacred Trinity? The Father is Spirit, Christ is Spirit, and the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ. If we could start afresh with only the New Testament before us, I think we should certainly reach the doctrine of the Trinity; but I hope we should put equal emphasis upon the Unity of the Godhead, and not attempt to separate too closely between the operations of the several Persons in that Godhead. What mattered to St. Paul was the reality of the Holy Spirit's work. Here he was on the sure ground of experience. He knew the Spirit's power in his own life. He saw the "fruits of the Spirit" in his converts. His letters are full of passages where the varied results of the Spirit's control are described. He is the Holy Spirit, and His work is to sanctify.[1] But He is primarily the Spirit of Love, which St. Paul places first

[1] 1 Thess. ii. 13; Rom. viii. 2, xv. 16.

in the list of the fruits of the Spirit.[1] The Spirit being "God in action" must be the Spirit of Love, for God is Love. Divine energies are available for man—that is the apostle's conviction. Man is not left to himself to struggle through life as best he may. He is a "fellow-worker" with God, called to a great task, for which God supplies His own great power.

St. Paul shares in the largeness of his Master's vision of human nature. It is capable of big things because it is capable of being filled with God. In these letters we have a picture of man holding daily commerce with the unseen world, rejoicing in the new access of life which that commerce brings him, and spending all his days in trying to initiate others into his own secret.

4. Of the letters dating from the first imprisonment, those to Colossæ and Ephesus [2] are closely connected together. Both deal

[1] Gal. v. 22.

[2] The letter to the Ephesians is certainly a circular letter intended for a group of churches. It is couched in general terms, and contains no reference to local conditions at Ephesus, though St. Paul had spent a long time there. Personal greetings are absent; and while the other letters end with the benediction in the second person, this ends with it in the third person.

with the absolute supremacy of Christ as Head of all creation, and as Head of the Church. Prominent in them is the idea of unity, an idea which we can see growing in strength and importance as the apostle's thought developed. The letter to the Colossians was called out by the appearance of a Gnostic heresy in the region of Colossæ, of which the chief doctrines were that matter was essentially evil, and that God was sundered from the world of created being by a gulf which was bridged by an ascending series of spiritual powers. Reverence for these angelic powers was being taught, and also a rigorous asceticism, so that by control of the body man's spirit might escape from the evil necessarily inherent in all matter.[1] St. Paul meets this heresy by the assertion that in Christ " were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through him, and unto him; and he is before all things, and in him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all

[1] Cp. ii. 8–23.

things he might have the pre-eminence" (i. 16–18). As Head of the Church He is the reconciling power, drawing all believers into a living fellowship of unity with Himself by His redeeming activity.[1]

In the letter to the Ephesians St Paul develops his central thought of life mediated through Christ by the Spirit. The individual is part of a larger whole. The Spirit works in a society. Upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, with Christ as chief corner-stone, the spiritual temple of humanity is being built; "in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God in the Spirit" (ii. 20–21). His thought takes the widest sweep. There is a divine purpose at work, a mystery of God's will, which has been made known, and it is nothing less than "to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (i. 9, 10). A new humanity is in the making; with the coming of Christ all the old barriers between Jew and Gentile are broken down. The Cross has removed them. Christ is "our peace, who made both one, and brake

[1] i. 18–20.

down the middle wall of partition" (ii. 14). There is only one Father in heaven, and one family of men on earth.[1] "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (iv. 4–6). Of this redeemed society Christ is Head, as He is Head of all creation,[2] and from Him flows the life which can make the society strong and vigorous.[3]

We think of St. Paul writing this letter in prison at Rome. We picture his mind moving from the thought of Rome's unity and sway over the civilized world to the thought of a wider unity, and of a peace in Christ more wonderful than any *pax Romana*. He was a prisoner, but no power could fetter the free movement of the Spirit, and the word of God was not bound. So he will send out this letter to the Ephesian Churches, reminding them of the unity of all Christians in Christ and of the unexplored possibilities of spiritual fellowship in Him. The note of strain is markedly absent from the letter. There is a quiet confidence about it, as of

[1] iii. 15; cp. Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11.
[2] i. 20–24. [3] iv. 15, 16.

one who has penetrated into the secret of God's purpose and knows that what he sees as a vision of unity will gradually be translated into a reality as the divine love has its way.

In an earlier epistle St. Paul had spoken of the unity of the body and its members, and of the one Spirit "dividing to each one severally even as he will" (i. Cor. xii. 11). Unity was never far from the thought of the man who had successfully fought the battle of Gentile freedom against the Judaizers with their narrower outlook, but the conception of unity grows upon him, till in this Ephesian letter it entirely masters him. He sees humanity in its length and breadth as the subject of redemption. He sees Christ as the universal Saviour. The only hindrance to the constructive work of the Spirit is the sin in human hearts. The only barriers are ethical barriers.

St. Paul does not leave his readers face to face with mere visions. He brings them down to earth from the spiritual heights. Both these letters to Colossæ and Ephesus are severely practical in their insistence on the moral duties of the home and the commonwealth. His converts are to "walk in love,"

keep from heathen vices, be honest and truthful.[1]

The ideal of family life is described. Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants are all brought face to face with Christ and His standard of conduct.[2] The Christian ethic in its source and working is here set out. These words sum up the teaching, "and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Col. iii. 14, 15).[3]

St. Paul's letters must always remain the greatest text-book of Christian experience. The library of Christian experience grows with the growth of the centuries, but all subsequent volumes are commentaries on this first volume, which shows us, in all the freshness

[1] Eph. v. 1–14, iv. 17–28.

[2] Eph. v. 22–vi. 9; Col. iii. 18–25.

[3] Space will not allow of my touching on the Pastoral Epistles. If not by St. Paul as they stand they clearly reflect Pauline teaching and influence. They deal with the organization of the Church, which was now a rapidly growing thing. They are practical rather than doctrinal. Would the seed which the apostle had planted grow true to type in the future? Before he died he would do what he could to secure that the growth was true.

of its youth, Christianity in the working. Here we see it as a missionary religion. We see what it meant to St. Paul, what it meant to his converts. Its scale of values is put before us. We see it in its depth, rooted in certain fundamental truths about God and Jesus Christ; in its breadth, as it spreads among different cultures and societies of men. We marvel at St. Paul's achievement. But he had no secret which may not be ours also. Christ, who called him to be an apostle and gave him strength for his work, calls us too, each in our measure, to service for Him.

We are members of a spiritual commonwealth. In proportion as we value its citizenship shall we wish to enable others to share it.

Chapter XII The Book of the Revelation

THE writer of this book is in exile,[1] and writes a letter to the churches in which he worked. The letter is in form quite unlike the letters of St. Paul. It records a series of visions and belongs to the order of writing known as Apocalyptic. It contains a message of encouragement to the Christian Church, which was just entering on a period of severe persecution. The bulk of modern scholars date the book somewhere between the years A.D. 90–96. The Emperor Domitian died in A.D. 98. In his reign emperor-worship was at its height, and Christians were being required to worship the Cæsar. Violent persecution broke out, and the outlook for the Christian communities was serious. The situation described in the book suits the reign of Domitian better than the earlier reigns of Nero and Vespasian, or the later reign of Nerva.[2]

[1] i. 9.

[2] Cp. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, ch. ix., and Charles, *The Revelation of St. John*, Vol. I, ch. ix.

Prophecy and Apocalyptic are always related to contemporary circumstances. This fact must be our guiding principle in interpreting this strange writing. The message of the letter was a message for a particular set of people in a particular set of historical circumstances. No doubt the thought of the writer takes a wider range, and in the struggles of these local churches in Asia Minor he sees an illustration of the general conflict between good and evil, and embraces in his vision all time and eternity; but his main purpose in writing was determined by the practical necessities of the moment. What is known as the "Futurist" method of interpreting the book is surely a wrong method. To look in it for detailed predictions about the end of the world, to work out on the basis of figures mentioned either in it or in Daniel, the date at which the final consummation may be expected, is to do violence to the principles of historical study, and to misinterpret the meaning of Inspiration. There has hardly been a period in the life of the Church when predictions of the coming end have not been made. The event has always falsified them. Such predictions flourish to-day under the stress and excite-

ment caused by the late war. We cannot preclude the element of catastrophe in God's governance of the world, and about the date of the end none can dogmatize. But seeing how long it has taken man to reach his present state, and what possibilities yet await the human race in the application of Christianity to social and international life, and remembering that with God "a thousand years are but as one day," the probability is that human history has still a long course to run.

We have to take into consideration the genius of the prophetic mind. Vision was one of the natural *media* of its working. The prophet is one who sees the eternal breaking through into time. He is full of the sense of crisis and impending judgment, tends naturally to foreshorten events, chafes at the slow movements of secular history. With him there is always a "Day of the Lord." Like Amos, he has a constant vision of the Lord standing by the altar and saying "Smite"![1] This book shares in the nature of prophecy, of which Apocalyptic was a development. It abounds in symbolism, the exact meaning of which may be variously

[1] ix. 1.

interpreted. But behind all the visions and all the symbolism are great truths and principles, which stand above time and local conditions, and are valid for the Christian Church in all ages.

We need not trouble ourselves with any detailed analysis of the contents of the book. It begins with a brief introduction (i. 1–8). Then follow the "letters to the churches," in which each of the seven churches is warned and exhorted or encouraged (i. 8–iii. 22). The remainder of the book is concerned with the great spiritual struggle between the forces of good and evil. On the one side is the struggling Christian Church; on the other the great power of Rome. But the local churches and Rome are merged in a larger vision of the Church and the World, of Christ and Antichrist. Heaven and Hell open; the scale of the conflict is enlarged to infinity. At the end, pledge of final victory for good, pledge of the triumph of the Ascended Christ, the Holy City is seen descending out of heaven. Evil is vanquished. The kingdom of the saints is set up. Divine peace reigns over the scene; strife and sorrow are forgotten. The whole landscape is bathed in heavenly light.

1. The central figure of the book is Jesus Christ. Authority, power, glory, majesty are His attributes.[1] He gives the message to the churches, passes judgment upon them, warns, encourages, " searcheth the reins and hearts " (ii. 23). These persecuted Christians were bidden remember that they were in the keeping of One who had all history in His control. He was Head of the Church. No real harm could happen to them. Let them be patient. In the end Christ would win and they would share His triumph.[2]

2. We ask what guarantee there is that God will be victorious in the long run. One might argue that without the assurance of the final triumph of goodness morality could not sustain itself, and that the universe ceases to be a rational whole if our moral ideals are not an expression of the nature of ultimate reality. But for the Christian the firmest foundation for his hope lies in the Cross of Christ and its sequel. There seeming defeat is seen to be victory. Calvary was followed by the Resurrection and Ascension. That is certainly the teaching of this book. " And I saw in the midst of the throne and of

[1] i. 12–18, v., xii. 10, xix. 11–16.
[2] vi. 9–11, vii. 14, xx. 4.

the four living creatures . . . a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, having seven horns" (v. 6). He who once went "as a lamb to the slaughter" is now clothed in victorious might. The cry of the great multitude before the throne is "Salvation unto our God which sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb" (vii. 10). His victory rendered possible the victory of the martyrs; "they overcame him (Satan) because of the blood of the Lamb" (xii. 11). The love which went to the utmost limits of self-sacrifice on Calvary and triumphed over sin and death can be trusted to prevail.

3. How broad is the sweep of the artist's brush as he paints the picture of the heavenly kingdom! The unnumbered throng of the redeemed are gathered "out of every nation and of all tribes and peoples and tongues" (vii. 9). Into the heavenly city is brought "the glory and the honour of the nations" (xxi. 24). Each race makes its contribution to the rich life of the whole. "The tabernacle of God is with men" (xxi. 3); humanity in its length and breadth is God's dwelling-place. The invitation to the Church of Laodicea is unqualified in its range; "if any man hear my voice and open the door,

I will come in to him" (iii. 20). Thus the last book of the Bible matches the breadth of the opening chapter of the first. At the beginning Creation; humanity with all its career before it, with its unrealized possibilities. At the end humanity re-created, purified, redeemed.

4. The forces of the world and of evil are typified by the power of the Roman Empire. How changed the outlook from the days when St. Paul, his imagination fascinated by the unity and order of the imperial system, found in that system a model for his own constructive work, and pressed on eagerly to deliver his message in Rome itself! Now Rome is "the great harlot that sitteth upon many waters . . . the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus" (xvii. 1, 6). But her doom is impending; "fallen, fallen is Babylon the great . . . in one hour is thy judgment come" (xviii. 2, 10). The power of the Ascended Christ is irresistible. "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever" (xi. 15). The book sets the spiritual seal on all that has gone before in the long story of redemption told

in the Bible. Paradise lost, Paradise regained; expulsion from the garden with its tree of life, the right to the tree of life restored [1]; the man and the woman hiding from the face of God, God's servants seeing His face without fear [2]; incessant warfare between the serpent and the seed of the woman, "the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan," defeated and rendered powerless.[3]

5. As we ponder on this book, passing behind its strange symbolism to its spiritual meaning, the scale of the conflict therein described impresses itself on our minds. "And there was war in heaven" (xii. 7), where

> "Titan angels, Gabriel, Abdiel,
> Starr'd from Jehovah's gorgeous armouries,
> Tower, as the deep-domed empyrëan
> Rings to the roar of an angel onset." [4]

The origin of evil is beyond our ken, its mystery baffles our comprehension, but the Bible sees the meaning of the world in this fight between the good and the bad. "It is finished," said Jesus on the Cross, but the full fruits of that final victory have yet to be gathered. And the process of gathering

[1] ii. 7. [2] xxii. 4. [3] xx. 2.
[4] Tennyson, *Alcaics*.

them is long and painful. It is not only Christ's servants who are called to self-sacrifice and to whatever suffering self-sacrifice may involve. The divine love itself suffers daily from the sins of men. It is an intolerable thought of God which places Him in serenity above the conflict. He shares it, enters into the thick of the fight, carries eternally a Cross in His heart. We speak of divine Omnipotence, but there are some things which God cannot do. He cannot achieve His spiritual purpose without the free co-operation of human wills. As Archbishop D'Arcy puts it, Omnipotence " means that God's Nature is such that things cannot go finally wrong. It means that all opposing wills must and shall be subjugated by the power of Supreme Love. But to reach the triumph of love, in the great final consummation, measureless sufferings may have to be endured, measureless evils overcome. Only by the awful path of sacrifice can the Eternal Love move to victory over the oppositions of perverse wills. Here is the eternal significance of the Cross of Christ." [1] In other words, though the end is sure, the road to

[1] Essay " Love and Omnipotence " in *God and the Struggle for Existence* (Student Christian Movement).

the end is not mapped out in advance. We men and women have it in our power to hasten or delay the coming of the Kingdom, to increase or diminish the sum-total of spiritual good in the universe. God calls us to join in the fight on His side. We can refuse to listen, but only with grave, spiritual loss to ourselves, and I know not what agony to the loving heart of God. This book is veritably a *Revelation.* It bids us pass behind the outward show of things, behind Babylon with its rich life of commerce and craftsmanship and money-making, to the spiritual *soul* of things, and see there the divine purpose and the divine struggle. It shows us Christ and His victory on the Cross as the real meaning of the mystery of human life. It sets us in the eternal places that thence we may gain "clear prospect" over time and history. It shows us a world throbbing with spiritual passion.

Surely, if this be the meaning of life (and if it has not this meaning, it has none that we can discover), the challenge of Christ must strike home to-day to all who name themselves by His name. We are living in an age of intense spiritual activity. New forms of life, social, political, economic,

are coming to the birth. New nations are growing with consciousness of nationhood. No one with a spark of imagination can fail to realize, if he stops to think, the immense possibilities for the future which lie hid in this restless present. The world is being rapidly re-made; but on what model? There comes in Christ's claim and Christ's challenge. Christ says, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. I can consecrate this rising life in India, China, Africa. They are mine. I can lead them along the paths of character and service and true happiness." The voice from the throne says, "Behold, I make all things new" (xxi. 5). The purpose of God is ever creative. Out of the old He brings the new, as His Spirit moves amid the societies of men. To-day is one of God's great, creative periods. The mould is there, Christ the everlasting pattern for men; the molten metal is there, all these new tendencies and impulses in the growing nations; but how is the metal to reach the mould? "Go *ye* therefore, and make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. xxviii. 19).

We want vision to-day to see the bigness of missionary enterprise. "And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his

eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (2 Kings vi. 17). Over against the vastness of the task let us set the Figure of Jesus Christ as this book portrays Him. He is "the Living One" (i. 18); "The Word of God . . . and he hath on his garment and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (xix. 13, 16); "the bright, the morning star" (xxii. 16), herald of the conquering dawn. Christ's cause must win; God cannot suffer permanent defeat. The question is, whether we shall range ourselves on the side of Christ, and help Him in His great missionary purpose, or whether we shall refuse His call. Can there be a more inspiring task for man than to co-operate in God's eternal purpose? Is there anywhere a greater wonder than the wonder of the Christian thought of God calling men in love into a fellowship of service with Himself? That service entails thought and effort and self-sacrifice, but these things belong to the very nature of love. They bring their own reward in a closer companionship with the Eternal Friend of man.