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I.

THE FUTURE OF CALVINISM.*

THE year 1892 was a year of great importance for the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. Two influential groups of Churches, both originating in a secession from the Established Church, the one in 1834, the other in 1886, were, after long negotiations, brought together, and in June of that year held their "First General Synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands." For various reasons this event has excited considerable interest. It was something unforeseen and unexpected. Both groups, to be sure, were one in their confession and form of government, and both shared the conviction that a Reformed Christian was in duty bound to his Bible and his confession to break with the Established Church. Still, concerning "the method of reformation," *i. e.*, the manner in which this breach ought to be brought about, there existed an appreciable difference of opinion. This difference in method gave rise to the different attitudes which the two sides assumed in relation to the property of the Established Church and the civil authorities. The Christian Reformed Church, originating in the secession of 1834, had gradually come to consider itself as an entirely new Church, and as having broken off all connection with both the governing bodies and the individual members of the establishment. Consequently it raised no claim in the civil courts to retain or recover the property of the Established Church, and presented itself to the civil authorities as a new and different organization. On the other hand, the so-called

* [Our readers are indebted to Prof. G. Vos, Ph.D., D.D., of Princeton Seminary, for the translation of Dr. Bavinck's paper.—EDITORS.]

IV.

THE FUNCTION OF THE PROPHET.

THERE is a considerable difference of opinion concerning the etymological sense of the chief Hebrew term for "prophet" (*nābî*), but there is scarcely any as to its meaning. Usage seems to settle that point very clearly. In the Book of Exodus (vii. 1) Jehovah says to Moses, "See I have made thee a god to Pharaoh, and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet," that is, as was said before (iv. 15, 16), "Thou shalt speak unto him and put words in his mouth . . . and he shall be thy spokesman unto the people." The prophet then was one who spoke by inspiration as an interpreter of the will of God. He was God's mouth (Jer. xv. 19) to the people. This was his supreme, differentiating characteristic. He might be of lofty birth or of lowly, learned or unlearned, eloquent or a stammerer, a companion of kings or a dweller among the poor, but the one thing which made him what he was, was that through him came a message from God. He was a herald to declare what had been communicated to him from on high. Similar is the usage in the New Testament. Here the word (*prophētēs*) retains its old and primary signification in profane Greek, "one who speaks for a god and interprets his will to man," as Tiresias did for Jove (Pindar), Orpheus for Bacchus (Eurip.), or the Pithia for Apollo, and hence is defined by Thayer as "one who speaks forth by divine inspiration." In both Testaments it was the gift of the Spirit which took a man out of the class of his fellows, and made him an organ of divine communication (Num. xi. 17, 25; Luke i. 67).

The head of the order was Moses, of whom it is said that (Deut. xxxiv. 10) there arose not a prophet like unto him "whom Jehovah knew face to face." He alone was for weeks together in intimate personal communion with the Most High. But the promise made to Israel through the law-giver (Deut. xviii. 16) was, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." The connection in which this promise is recorded, and its contrast with magic and sorcery on one hand and with false prophets on the other, give reason for the opinion that it was not intended singly and directly to set forth the Messiah, but was rather

collective, and referred to a series of inspired men, culminating finally in Christ, the great prophet, "mighty in word and deed before all the people." The promise was fulfilled, and for a thousand years a succession of godly men was raised up and commissioned to speak in the name of the Lord, and utter His thoughts. They differed greatly in personal character and also in the way they were qualified for their work. At times it was by a dream, or again by a vision or trance, or again and more commonly by an immediate divine impulse given to the prophet's own thoughts, but in all cases the result was the same, nor is there any reason to imagine a greater dignity or power in any one of these ways as contrasted with the others. Whether the prophet dreamed as did Joseph the son of Jacob or the other Joseph of the New Testament; or was in a trance as Isaiah in the temple, or Peter at Joppa; or received direct communication as Samuel in Shiloh, or Philip on the way to Gaza; he was made the bearer of a divine message. While therefore he was a religious teacher, this does not include the main function of his office. The priests were teachers of religion, "the priest's lips should keep knowledge," and so are the ministers of the Gospel now, but neither class as such does the work of a prophet. They set forth what they have learned by prayer and study of the divine will; but the prophet utters what the Lord has given him to communicate. He is a mouthpiece of the Almighty in a sense in which no other official can be, since he declares what he has learned immediately from God without any intervening medium.

Hence the prophet of Scripture is different from all other prophets, and uttered the only genuine prophecy. There is a school of writers who maintain just the contrary, asserting that special divine guidance was extended to heathen nations whose religions "had their appropriate task in preparing the nations of the world for the higher religion when it should come to them."* This is contrary to the express statements of Scripture. In vain are we referred to Melchizedek, Jethro and Balaam. These indeed were born and bred outside the covenant people, but they were brought into contact with Israel and only in that contact performed any prophetic functions that we are informed of. They are therefore exceptional instances brought forward for a specific purpose, and consequently do not and cannot represent the general class of ethnic prophets. Accordingly Moses represents to the children of Israel over and over the fact that they have peculiar and unique privileges. "Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire as thou hast heard, and live? . . . Unto thee it was showed that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God;

* Briggs' *Messianic Prophecy*, p. 4.

there is none else beside him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice that he might instruct thee" (Deut. iv. 33, 35, 36). Thus there is a marked contrast between what God did for Israel and what He did for other peoples. Not that He gave more to the former of the same thing than He did to the latter, but that He gave to one what He did not give to the others, as we subsequently read (xiv. 2), "The Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth." Hence afterward one of the sweet singers of Israel called on all the Lord's servants and them that stood in the courts of His house, to sing praises unto His Name (Ps. cxxxv. 4).

"For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself,
And Israel for his peculiar treasure."

And a later Psalmist concludes a song of thanksgiving in a similar strain (cxlvii. 19, 20):

"He sheweth his Word unto Jacob,
His statutes and his judgments unto Israel.
He hath not dealt so with any nation;
And as for his judgments, they have not known them."

This is quite in accordance with the statement in the burst of grateful praise known as Psalm ciii:

"He made known his ways unto Moses,
His acts unto the children of Israel,"

where the singer, after recounting his own personal mercies, passes to those shown to God's people, and refers in the couplet quoted to the wondrous revelation of Jehovah's nature made to Moses as he stood in the cleft of the rock, "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger," etc. (Deut. xxxiv. 6). So the prophet Amos, to sharpen his rebuke of prevailing sins, recites the Lord's words (iii. 2), saying, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will visit upon you all your iniquities." Similar is the testimony of the Saviour saying to the woman of Samaria (Jno. iv. 22), "Ye worship ye know not what; we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews." And the Apostle Paul follows his Master in reiterating the same sentiment (Rom. iii. 1), "What advantage then hath the Jew? Much every way; first of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God."

There was then a difference, not merely of degree, but of kind, between the covenant people and the rest of the world. The nations at large had the light of nature and of the law written on the heart, and they were under the superintending providence of God which was preparing the way for the introduction and diffusion of the

Gospel; but they did not have the gift of prophecy or any specific divine revelation. Darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the peoples. The ethnic peoples as strangers to the covenants of promise were, as the apostle says (Eph. ii. 12), "having no hope and without God in the world." They had what they called prophets, for, as all heathen antiquity shows, men everywhere thirst for divine revelation and look in every direction for some intimation of the will of God. And of course there were those who professed to meet this desire and disclose the purposes of the Most High. But they were either deceivers or deceived, either conscious impostors or carried away by a deep physical excitement which seemed to them a momentary possession by a higher power. As von Orelli says,* "No phenomenon analogous to Biblical prophecy, even in form, is to be found anywhere in the world of nations." Heathen mantism was a working up of the susceptibilities, an artificial intensifying of the emotions, so that the man surrendered himself to the dominion of the nature-power, whatever that might be, and in this ecstatic state gave forth what occurred to his mind. These utterances were always vague, obscure, ambiguous or unintelligible. They added nothing to the sum of human knowledge. In no sense did they constitute part of a system of revealed truth. Nor did they have any meaning or use beyond the circumstances that called them forth. The prophets of Scripture, on the other hand, were in the full possession and exercise of their faculties when they received divine communications. There was a converse with God, worthy of the majesty and condescension of the Supreme Spirit, who announced in clear speech His sovereign will. To Isaiah was vouchsafed a vision of wondrous majesty and glory, but he heard a voice that distinctly communicated the message he was to bear. Ezekiel fell upon his face, overpowered at the sight of the stately symbol of wheels and living creatures, but the Spirit lifted him up and he received audible directions as to what he was to do and say. Daniel in like manner fell down, stunned by the glorious vision he saw by the river Hiddekel (x. 4, 8), and there remained no strength in him, yet presently he was caused to stand upright, and then was made to understand what was to befall his people in the latter days. In all these cases there was a peculiar divine manifestation, one of startling brilliancy and power, yet in none of them was the prophet taken out of himself, or did he lose consciousness. God spoke to him in intelligible speech as one spirit speaks to another. Moreover, in heathenism the oracle spake only when it was consulted. Its existence was due to what has been called "the noble hunger for God implanted in man," † which led him to seek in any and

* *Old Testament Prophecy*, Eng. Transla., p. 24.

† Orelli.

every way some light from above. Hence the ethnic prophets rarely if ever volunteered their utterances; they waited until application was made, and then gave such reply as they could. But in Scripture the case is the reverse. The prophets usually are sent to deliver their message, whether men will hear or forbear. And so far from being self-moved, often they shrank from a work which they considered too great, or too holy, or too difficult for them, as we see in the case of Isaiah (vi), or Jeremiah (i. 6, xx. 9), or Daniel (x. 16, 17). Instead of speaking out of their own heart, they represented their Creator, and bore His message to their fellowmen, a message always worthy of Him from whom it purported to come, and often confirmed by miraculous signs and wonders. It is vain then to attempt to put Biblical and ethnic prophets upon the same plane. The difference between them is wide and radical. Heathen oracles testify to the intense desire men have always felt for divine revelation, but they also testify that that desire was never satisfied. It uniformly led to imposture or delusion. Whereas the Scriptural prophet was a man of God, called to the performance of a special function and often against his will. And his utterances, although always adapted to the occasion which called them forth, always also had a permanent value. The prophets spoke because they had to. There was, as in the case of Jeremiah, "as it were a burning fire shut up in their bones" (xx. 9), and they could not contain. Their inspiration was not morbidly sought for by artificial means, but burst forth by a sort of inner constraint. Yet various as were the organs of this inspiration, and different as were the circumstances which it was intended to meet, the prophetic utterances of Scripture are pervaded by an indubitable unity. They agree in character, tone and spirit as the expression of one supreme will. All bear relation to the sovereign purpose of divine revelation, the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. The speakers themselves may not have been, indeed we may surely say were not, always conscious of that higher plan to which they were subservient, but the plan existed, and we can see in looking back how the multitude of divine oracles were bound together as coherent parts of one great continuous development of vital and universal truth.

The distinct apprehension of this fact sets aside a number of mistaken views as to the function of the prophet.

1. He was not to *give the results of his own abilities, natural or acquired*. It was not his intellectual elevation above the body of the people, his close observation of men and things, his power of forecasting the sequence of events, his creative imagination or his force of logic that made him what he was; but a divine call. The word of the Lord came to him, and he delivered that word. The

delivery might be, no doubt was, affected in form by his individual characteristics, even as we see a marked difference in the tone and style of different men, as in Isaiah compared with Ezekiel, or Hosea compared with Amos, or Habakkuk compared with Zephaniah, or the Hokmah literature in comparison with the lyrics of David or Asaph. Still in all cases, without any exception, the prophet was a spokesman for God, a fact which differentiated him from all other speakers, and especially from those who falsely pretended to bear a message from God. For they are called by Jeremiah (xxiii. 16) those that "speak a vision of their own heart and not out of the mouth of the Lord," and by Ezekiel (xiii. 3), "the foolish prophets that follow their own spirit." The true prophet was he who spoke the word of the Lord and that only.

2. Nor did the prophet *embody the spirit of the age*, and in that way establish his claims. Some have suggested that as there is a sympathetic connection of the individual human spirit with the national spirit, so sometimes persons appear in whom the ruling emotions and presentiments of the national spirit are transfigured into lucid thoughts, which under favorable circumstances find expression in prophetic sayings. In such a case the speaker simply puts forth in concrete form what is the general sentiment of the nation. He gives shape and voice to what is already in the air, and waiting for some one to arrest and express it. But this explanation does not apply at all to the holy men of the Old Testament. In general they stood opposed to the popular expectations. Nor did the importance of their office rise and fall with the national life, as was the case with heathen seers, of whom Plutarch says that they were no longer consulted when the Hellenistic nationality ceased to exist, or, if applied to, it was only for trifling matters. But Hebrew prophecy only bloomed the brighter in the decay of the State. In exile and captivity Israel heard the voice of God. And as that voice denounced sin and its doom in the days of prosperity, so after the stroke had fallen it took occasion to dilate upon the establishment of the kingdom that shall have no end. Its tone and bearing, so lofty and hopeful even amid the prostration of all Israel's earthly hopes, showed clearly that it came not from within, but was a message from without. Often, indeed, it illustrated Isaiah's fine utterance, that as far as are the heavens above the earth, so far are God's ways above men's ways, and His thoughts above their thoughts.

3. Nor was it the prophet's function *to act the statesman and the patriot*. Mr. George Adam Smyth (*Isaiah*, p. 24) represents the prophet as passing through three stages of experience. The first is that of the idealist, in which he has a vision of the glory and blessedness to result from the fulfillment of the divine promises, and

accordingly describes a utopia, a grand picture of the ideal city of God. After this comes a realistic picture of things as they are with all their sin and shame, a very humbling and saddening view. The third phase is an intuition of God's will, a perception of the line of action He will take, and hence a prophecy of a much more glorious and enduring prosperity than was described in the ideal vision. And this is illustrated by the experience of all reformers in every age. In the discharge of these functions the prophet figures as a patriot (p. 37) and as a statesman (p. 119). In like manner Dr. Driver (*Isaiah*, p. 3) considers the prophet of whom he writes as a reformer, as a statesman, and as a theologian. To the same effect we are told in *The Biblical World*, April, 1893, that the prophets are now "revealed not only as inspired reformers whose clarion voices summon their people to repentance and faith, but as unselfish patriots, as judicious and clear-sighted statesmen, whose divine mission and native sagacity thrust them as central and conspicuous figures into the complicated and turbulent politics of their day." Now although there is considerable plausibility in these views, yet we are convinced that they are misleading, and tend to obscure or minimize the Scriptural idea of the office of a prophet who speaks in the name of God. The prophet was simply the Lord's messenger on religious themes. He loved his country not so much because it was his country as because it was for the time being the seat of God's kingdom. He spoke to kings and rulers and nobles not at all in regard to political interests, but as to moral duties. Statesmanship has been defined as the science of compromise, but a man entrusted with God's message could not compromise in any degree or under any circumstances. It is a mistake, therefore, to confound the prophet's sphere with that of any human functionary, for it was specifically different and peculiar in origin, aim and character.

4. Nor was the prophet intended to oppose the priesthood. His activity was not "a constant protest against the sacrificial spirit of the Levitical ritual."* What he did protest against with unsparing severity was the substitution of ritual for ethics, or the combination of sacrifices with evil doing. On this point all were alike. David and Hosea and Amos and Isaiah and Micah and Jeremiah and Ezekiel spoke with one voice against reliance upon ritual services to the neglect of righteousness, mercy and truth. Nor is this wonderful. It could not well be otherwise. The tendency of human nature is always to make much of external observances, and to cultivate them without regard to the spirit they are intended to express and without which they are absolutely worthless. Examples of this are found not only in false religions, but in the true; not only in

* Stanley, *Jewish Church*, First Series, 497.

corrupt forms of Christianity, but in the most evangelical bodies; and the diaries of eminent saints bear witness to the intrusion of this superstition into the experience even of exemplary believers. Any rousing call to the modern Church to awake to its duty is sure to dwell upon the evils of Formalism, but does that mean that forms are of no authority or value, that Sabbaths and sanctuaries and sacraments are to be abandoned? No more did the Hebrew prophets, when they scourged the folly of empty and heartless sacrifice and incense, mean that these solemn services were a snare and an offense. There was no conflict between Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet in the days of David and Solomon; nor between Azariah the chief priest and Isaiah the prophet in the time of Hezekiah; nor between Joshua the priest and Zechariah the prophet at the Restoration. Each class of officials had its appropriate field, and instead of opposing each other moved side by side in their common object to serve Jehovah and promote the welfare of his people.

5. Still less is there reason to regard the prophet, as Renan did, as a *product of the Semitic race*. It is true that this race when viewing a phenomenon are apt to bring it into immediate connection with the supreme cause which they habitually recognize, unlike the Indo-Germans who seek by reflection to analyze the object, learn its peculiar nature, compare it with others of the same class and then refer it to its proximate causes. Their perception is intuitive, not systematizing. But still if a prophet owes his being to this racial characteristic, then he is a human product and speaks from his own consciousness. It was quite otherwise with Moses, Samuel and their fellows. Their gifts were due to the coming of the Spirit upon them, telling them what they were to do or to say; and they always distinguish between what they gain by their own study and reflection and what comes to them from above. Nor can we find in any other of the Semitic races any order of men that even remotely approximate the Hebrew seers. All had prophets of some sort, but none who claimed to utter what was immediately communicated to them by the Most High.

The prophets of Scripture, whether of the Old Testament or the New, stand by themselves as a distinct class of men who, whatever else they may be or do, are separated from all other men by the fact that they are organs of inspiration, spokesmen of God, bearers of a divine message. They are an immediate link between heaven and earth, between God and man. Through them the Most High reveals His will, and hence endues them with an authority which is seen nowhere else on earth. Whatever other offices they hold, whatever other duties they perform, are all subordinate to this one pre-eminent function. And hence to lay stress upon accidental or per-

sonal peculiarities, upon civil or political relations, or upon the circumstances of the times, is to lose sight of the main point, and to cast into the shade the sovereign and distinguishing characteristic of the genuine prophet. Such a course seems to bring prophecy into the plane of a natural development, but such a gain, if gain it is, is purchased at a fearful cost—the cost of losing all semblance of divine authority.

We observe a plainly marked difference among the possessors of the prophetic gift. Some are men of action, of whom the most illustrious are Elijah and Elisha. These were raised up to meet an emergency, by warning or rousing or comforting the people of God, and usually were enabled to perform signs and wonders. But the record of their doings was made by others than themselves, and constitutes a portion of the history of the times—a portion alike interesting and instructive. Others were men of words, that is, their main work was to declare God's message to the men of their time, and then to put that message on record so as to be a constituent and abiding part of divine revelation. Of these prophets of record we observe three great classes. (1) One is confined to the lyric expression of truth. Of these David seems to have been the chief and the pattern. The sweet singer of Israel left behind him specimens of every kind of poetic composition. He, and every other person to whom any portion of the Psalter is assigned, possessed and exercised the prophetic gift, that is, spoke what God wished to have spoken. And nothing is more singular than the fact that the Psalter, although of such varied authorship, contains nothing inconsistent with its claim to be the expression of thought and feeling inspired from on high. (2) A second kind of prophetic utterance is that which has come to be known as the *Hokmah* (or *Wisdom*) literature. Both the form and the subject of *Gnomic* poetry seem at first sight to be unworthy of a place in revelation, yet experience in all ages has vindicated the usefulness of this mode of speech as serving a purpose which could not so well be attained in any other way. The Bible is a book for man, and it must have what is suited to all the various classes and conditions of the human race. (3) The third and most copious form of the prophets' activity is that which, whether in plain prose or in lofty poetry, sets forth the doctrinal and moral truth which, while it serves a present purpose in the utterer's lifetime, is also fitted to instruct all subsequent generations. These utterances collected together make a divine library of peculiar and inestimable value. There is nothing in the literature of all the world beside that is worthy to be compared with them.

The term prophet in English has come to mean one who predicts

what is to come, but the Biblical use of the word disdains any such limitation. The prophet of old might have adopted the motto of St. Bernard, *Respice, Aspice, Prospice*. His business was to express God's will in relation to the past, or the present, or the future, as the case might be.

1. It is recorded in the First Book of Chronicles (xxix. 29), "Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the history (Heb. *words*) of Samuel the seer, and in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the history of Gad the seer; with all his reign and his might and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries." Again in 2 Chron. (xiii. 22), "And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and his ways and his sayings are written in the commentary (midrash) of the prophet Iddo." Again in 2 Chron. (ix. 29), "Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, are they not written in the history of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam the son of Nebat?" So in xii. 15, Shemaiah the prophet is mentioned as one of the historiographers of Rehoboam. These instances are sufficient to show that a record of the past was an important part of the prophet's function. God taught and trained His people not only by words but by His dealings with them, and that this instruction might be given fully and faithfully it was needful that the record should be authenticated. Such an authentication was secured by the official character of the man who made it. He was a prophet, that is, a man under divine guidance, both as to what he should insert and what he should omit, and in the whole construction of his narrative. We do not find anywhere a trace of the philosophical historian who seeks out hidden causes, and coördinates events so as to support a given theory. On the contrary, the prophetic recorders are mere annalists, like the evangelists of a later dispensation, giving to us a simple and natural consecutive narrative, of which the great ruling characteristic is that it is thoroughly and absolutely trustworthy. No rhetoric, no philosophy, no bias, no secret purpose to serve, but simply facts, the actual facts, whether for or against their rulers or their people. In this respect they stand alone in the literature of all ages.

2. But the prophet's main function was employed about the existing state of things, and contemplated his contemporaries. Our Lord said that He came not to destroy the law or the prophets, and when He gave His wonderful summary of human duty, added, "On these two commandments hangeth the whole law and the prophets." These utterances imply that the prophets continued the work of the law-giver, by applying in concrete cases the principles laid down

in the Decalogue. They spoke in the name of God, not to announce new truth but to show the bearing of what was already known. The burden of their messages is a call to repentance. They attack reigning vices, fraud, uncleanness, violence, false swearing, oppression, extortion, drunkenness, luxurious living, neglect of the widow and fatherless, judicial corruption, bribery, covetousness—indeed every species of evil doing. There is great plainness of speech. Things are called by their right names, so that no one could mistake the meaning. Nor are the rebukes addressed merely to the absent or the defenseless, but uttered with the fidelity of Nathan when he said to David, "Thou art the man." Neither rank nor wealth avail to excuse any transgressor, or to shut the mouth of the prophet. He speaks to men and women, to old and young, to rulers and nobles, even to the king on his throne. But the prophet does not confine himself to violations of social ethics, but, like the great Apostle ages afterward, traces immorality to its source in ungodliness. Hence he calls upon men to seek God, to return to the Lord. He condemns all forms of idolatry. He warns against divination, sorcery and necromancy. He does not enjoin strict compliance with the forms of Levitical worship just for the same reason that our Saviour abstained from any such injunctions, viz., that there was no call for them. As the Pharisees in Christ's time were punctilious in ritual, so were the people to whom the prophets gave warning. Their great need was holiness of heart and life, the love of God and of their neighbor. The besetting sin of the people of both kingdoms was their inveterate tendency to seek other gods, and even when they worshiped the living God to use graven and molten images. Ezekiel was among those carried to Babylon in Jehoiachin's captivity, and began his official duties in exile, but when he was taken in vision to Jerusalem and looked into the court of the temple, there he saw the women weeping for Tammuz and the elders at the door of the Lord's house worshiping the sun (viii. 14, 16). Even when a large part of the nation was groaning in heathen bondage, the remnant persevered in the sin which had drawn down the grievous penalty. The teaching of the prophets was in substance the alternative Isaiah laid down (i. 19, 20), "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." They sought to attract men by dwelling on the mercy and loving-kindness of the Lord. Is there anything more touching than Hosea's apostrophe (xi. 8), "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim! How shall I deliver thee, Israel!" or the call of Isaiah, "Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts," etc. But not less fully and

graphically was the sterner aspect of Jehovah set forth. He was "of purer eyes than to behold evil and he could not look upon perverseness." He had a controversy with his people, and of that controversy there could be but one end. The preacher under the New Testament is bidden to tell men, "He that believeth shall be saved," and to add, "He that believeth not shall be condemned." The same alternative in another form was rung incessantly by the prophets of old in the ears of the people.

Nor was it different when the servant of the Lord came to deal with crowned heads, as Elijah with Ahab, or Elisha with Ahab's son, or Isaiah with Ahaz and Hezekiah, or Jeremiah with Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, or Amos with Jeroboam II. In no case did any one of them step forward to play the statesman. And he appeared not as a courtier or a man with a pet nostrum of his own for the welfare of the State, but as the organ through whom God communicated His will. A recent writer speaking of Isaiah's interview with Ahaz says,* "In it Isaiah first appears as a practical statesman, no longer speaking of sin, judgment and deliverance in broad general terms, but approaching the rulers of the State with a precise direction as to the course they should hold in a particular political juncture." It is very hard to see any special difference between Isaiah's words in this interview and his course on any other occasion. In each and every case he appeared as Jehovah's spokesman, declaring His will, and asking compliance on that ground and that only. In no case was it his own views that he announced, the results to which he had been led by experience, observation or reflection. On the contrary, it was always what God had said, and because He said it. The prophet, indeed, was often a man of culture and intellect, and with a mind ripened by long and varied conversance with men and things, but this never appears as the basis of his counsels or directions. He distinguishes constantly between the wisdom of men, however great or famous, and the voice of God, and it is the latter which he is commissioned to declare.

3. But in addressing the present the prophet was also often led to disclose the future, rarely for the sake of posterity, but mainly to give force to what he said to his contemporaries. If he warned men against sin, he added emphasis to the warning by pointing out the inevitable consequences of disobedience. Thus when Amos was interfered with by Amaziah the priest of Bethel, and bidden to leave the country, he replied by foretelling the overthrow and exile of Israel, and Amaziah's personal share in the disaster. But a marked peculiarity of all predictions of calamity to the chosen people is that they are not unmingled. The wages of sin is terrible, the picture of

* *Prophets of Israel*, Robertson Smith, p. 254.

exile, bondage and cruel oppression is a fearful one, and the prolonged and varied wail which runs through the Lamentations of Jeremiah is not chargeable with exaggeration. Yet in every case there is some suggestion of ultimate relief. The central theme of Old Testament revelation, the organizing principle which binds the whole together, that which was hinted at the gates of Paradise and afterward broadly announced in the promise made to Abraham, even a world-wide blessing through the seed of the father of the faithful; this, often symbolized in the ritual of worship, and uttered in song by many a poet, was made by the prophets the ground of the consolation they offered in dark and cloudy days. Of course it lay in the future. Its precise nature was not understood by the people at large, and not always even by those who were commissioned to announce it afresh. But the announcement served its purpose. It often soothed a sorrow that seemed otherwise intolerable, and it kept alive that immortal hope by which Israel was distinguished from all the nations upon earth. The prophecies of the Messiah in every case served a present purpose by lifting for a time the veil of the future. It is quite true, as Prof. W. R. Smith says, that "So long as the Hebrew kingdom lasted every king was 'Jehovah's anointed,'" but every such king was a type of a far more glorious successor, and the prophets spoke of a king who, unlike David's lineal successors, was a priest upon his throne, and possessed of personal and official traits far in advance of anything the nation had yet seen. The representations of this personage vary very much according to the character and situation of the prophet or the object he has in view. Sometimes he is an extreme sufferer, at others he is a mighty conqueror, and in some unexplained way the suffering is stated as the condition and cause of the triumph. His moral qualities are always emphasized. He reigns in righteousness, he hates iniquity, he is just and holy and good, he cares for the poor, he relieves the distressed, he shatters the rod of the oppressor, he introduces peace, he brings together the ends of the earth, he scatters the darkness of ignorance and sin, and floods the world with light and truth. The prophets delight to picture a golden age which is not in the past, as in all the ethnic religions, but in the future. Yet this golden age is linked with a person who is not only its central figure but its cause.

Of late there has appeared an inclination to minimize the utterances of the prophets on this point, and to deny or question the existence of any precise or definite delineation of the Messiah. The needless and fatuity of this way of talking will be seen from what we assuredly know as to the state of mind among the Jews when our Lord came. At the very threshold of the Gospel we meet the venerable figures of the magi who come to Herod asking, "Where

is he that is born king of the Jews?" When Andrew had his first interview with Jesus, he said to Peter, "We have found the Messiah," and Philip said to Nathanael to the same effect, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write." The woman with whom our Lord conversed at Jacob's well said, "I know that Messiah cometh; when he is come he will declare to us all things." When our Lord spoke on the last, the great day of the feast, there were those who said, "This is the Christ." When the blind men at Jericho implored His help, they said, "Lord, have mercy on us, thou Son of David." And when the little children in the temple praised Him for His mighty works it was in the same words their elders had used the day before on the descent from Olivet, "Hosanna to the Son of David."

These instances indicate a general expectation in the public mind of some great deliverer to appear, who should arise out of the people and not merely rehabilitate Israel, but establish the kingdom of God from one end of the world to the other. Where did this universal hope come from, and upon what was it based? To these questions there can be but one answer. It came from the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and was built upon the express words of prophecy. The interpretation, therefore, that has always been given by the historic Church to the declarations of the prophets concerning the seed of the woman, the heir of promise, the star out of Jacob, the son of David, the king, the branch, the Messiah, the light of the world, is established by the fact that the Jews of Christ's time accepted it as the true and certain meaning of Holy Writ. Nor did our Lord correct them, but on the contrary taught His disciples that the things which were written in the law of Moses and in the prophets and in the psalms concerning him must needs be fulfilled (Luke xxiv. 44).

But along with the glowing predictions in reference to the covenant people and the wonderful deliverer who was to spring out of their number, is a series of utterances upon the doom of the heathen neighbors with whom they came in contact, not only of the lesser kingdoms of Ammon and Moab and Edom and the Philistine pentarchy, but also against such colossal empires as Egypt, Tyre, Assyria and Babylon. Nahum describes the grandeur and the overthrow of Nineveh; Isaiah paints the picture of Babylon's downfall; Ezekiel sets forth the riches and the pride of Tyre and its utter ruin; several unite in foretelling the disasters that should make Egypt the basest of kingdoms. All these varied and glowing prophecies were not simply an exercise of divination, but had an immediate present interest for those to whom they were addressed. They exalted men's idea of the greatness and power of

Him who thus disposed of the overgrown despotisms under which the earth groaned. They taught them to think of Him as sole ruler in the heavens and the earth, before whom all the nations together were less than nothing and vanity. He, the Creator of the ends of the earth, weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, and takes up the isles as a very little thing. The supremacy and majesty shown by Jehovah in His control of all earthly powers strengthens the confidence of His people in Him as their constant and sufficient protector. The contrast stated by Hannah in her lofty hymn runs all through the prophets:

“They that strive with the Lord shall be broken in pieces ;
 Against them shall He thunder in heaven :
 The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth ;
 And He shall give strength unto His king,
 And exalt the horn of His anointed.”

The downfall of the heathen was the uprising of God's oppressed people. The fulfillment of His menaces to the one was a guarantee of the fulfillment of His promises to the other. The poor Hebrews might well be dispirited when they compared their condition with that of the huge monarchies by whom they were surrounded, but enlargement came when they remembered that the mightiest of these powers compared with Jehovah, Israel's God, was but as the small dust of the balance; and not only that but that their days were numbered and all were to perish like the flower of the field. Israel, too, was to fall, to go into exile and groan under the oppressor's harsh yoke, but not forever. The fallen trunk would put forth new sprouts, and reassert its existence and its claims. This was the lesson taught by the most significant of symbols in Ezekiel's valley of vision. The whole space was covered with bones, not recent but old and dry, parched with summer's heat and chilled by winter's cold; but Ezekiel as he is told prophesies, and behold an earthquake and a thunderclap, bone comes to bone, sinews appear, flesh comes up and the skin covers them above. The prophet again utters his voice, and breath enters these renovated bodies, the pulse beats, the blood circulates, and they stand up upon their feet an exceeding great army. In this vigorous way is expressed the national resurrection of Israel. They come out of their graves and resume their old place. But there is no resurrection of the heathen neighbors. They pass away forever. The place which once knew them knows them no more. Never again do they have part among the living. They are only a memory. But Israel was restored and perpetuated, and is now the only existing race whose lineage goes back beyond the Christian era, beyond the Olympiads, beyond all historical monuments. But in a higher

sense the seed of promise once buried in a barbarous captivity now exists in the Church, confessedly the mightiest factor in modern civilization. The outlook on the future of the old prophets was not in vain. They strengthened the faith and encouraged the hearts of the children of God.

Especially was this the case with the last of the greater prophets, the man who, taken in his youth from his early home, seems never to have seen it again, but performed his work in the service of Chaldean monarchs, interpreting the dreams and signs which came to them. He stands on higher ground than any of his predecessors. He has nothing to say of the minor tribes and commonwealths lying around Palestine. He is occupied only with the great world-powers whose aim was universal dominion. His glance takes in a panorama of the world's history in which one power displaces another, a definite period being assigned to each. Before him are only two kingdoms, one secular and earthly, having the same spirit and aim, however it may change its form; the other spiritual, heavenly and divine. There is a fixed programme according to which there is a systematic progress in well-defined periods towards the goal that is ultimately and inevitably to be reached, although after many a severe crisis—the goal of an eternal kingdom which shall never be destroyed. This prophet, Daniel, is of peculiar interest to us, not only because our Lord quoted a very remarkable expression from him (the abomination of desolation), but because to Daniel is to be traced the phrase, the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, which occupied so large a space in our Lord's earthly teaching. The royal authority of the predicted deliverer had often been set forth by earlier prophets, but the last bearer of the prophetic message expressed it in terms exceedingly striking and picturesque: "I beheld in visions of the night, and behold, one came like a Son of Man with the clouds of heaven and came to the ancient of days, and was brought near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." This august conception fermented in the minds of the Jews till it took the form found in the Gospels, when devout persons not only waited for the consolation of Israel like the aged Simeon, or for the redemption of Jerusalem like the holy Anna, but were looking for the kingdom of God like the Pharisees (Luke xvii. 20), or the good man and righteous, Joseph of Arimathea (xxiii. 51). Hence John the Baptist began his mission with the words, "The kingdom of heaven has drawn near," and our Lord did the same, also using this phrase to denote the blessed economy which he set

up in the world. And now when men wish to speak of the ultimate triumph of truth and righteousness in the earth, the best and most compendious phrase they can find is in the words taken from Daniel, the KINGDOM OF GOD.

Thus Daniel, although from the peculiarity of his position at a heathen court separated from the rest of the distinctively prophetic books, is found to sum up the substance of them all, and complete their statements by an outlook upon the whole world, bringing into a sharp contrast the one great purpose of God and the ambitious attempts of men at a world-wide empire. He more than any other sacred writer gave the suggestion of a universal history, a comprehensive view of all nations as constituent parts of one and the same humanity. This was a conception which seems never to have entered the minds of those great nations whose literature still continues to be regarded as embodying the highest expression of human thought. A Jewish exile employed at the court of Babylon flashed out a sequence and connection of events such as never occurred to the keenest and loftiest mind of Greece or Rome.

If the function of the prophet has been rightly stated in the foregoing, it follows that the Old Testament Scripture is an absolutely true record of the divine will and deserves the name which the Apostle Paul applies to it (Rom. iii. 2), "the oracles of God." Its authors were the spokesmen of their Maker, and His authority attaches to all that they say. As the Apostle Peter declares, "No prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Ghost." The speaker was human, but the message was divine. As such it is the supreme rule of faith and duty, being without mixture of error. The proper labor of the student and critic is to ascertain its meaning, never to sit in judgment upon the correctness or propriety of its contents. All questions of that kind are foreclosed forever by the nature of prophecy. God saw fit to make a revelation of His will and purpose through chosen members of the race, all of whom had their peculiar temperament and character, but agreed in the one feature that they were channels of divine communication. Their utterances, therefore, were the utterances of God. As such they were quoted and applied and referred to by our Lord and His apostles. An appeal to them was an end of controversy. If so, then they must be certainly and entirely correct. There may be differences of opinion about the state of the text, or its precise signification, or its appropriate application; but when the meaning is once ascertained, there is no room for dispute or doubt. The prophetic gift and function covers the whole volume, the matter and the manner, the thoughts and the words,

the prose and the poetry, the narratives and the discussions, the leading points and the minor details. All is a divine utterance through human lips, and all is "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work."

And it is very plain in the nature of the case that this must be so. For if there is a part of the record which is exempt from divine influences and simply of human origin, we are at once involved in inextricable difficulty. For who is to decide which is truth and which is error? What rule or standard are we to apply? To these questions no answer is possible, and we should therefore be drifting about on a shoreless sea and never be able to reach solid ground. Were there errancy in Scripture, then when our Lord said to the tempter, "It is written," Satan might have replied, "True it is so written, but the prophet, when he said that, spoke of his own motion and therefore his words do not carry with them divine authority." But it does not appear that the old serpent with all his cunning was as quick-witted as some of the critics of our day. And hence he failed to avail himself of this short and easy method of parrying the thrusts of the sword of the Spirit. There is no middle ground therefore. The words of the prophets are all correct, or else those words are not a faithful expression of the divine will and are not an infallible guide of our opinions and our conduct. The obvious objection to this position is that there are incorrect utterances, discrepancies or other peculiar difficulties in the Bible which prevent us from accepting the literal truth of all its contents. The answer is that if these things exist, they are the result of an errant transmission of the original text for which we have no guarantee, or must be relegated to the class of difficulties which may be resolved in the future by archæological research. If all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, as the apostle asserts, we know of no man or set of men who have the right to say of one portion of the Word it is inspired and of another that it is not. To do that they must be inspired themselves—a claim which they do not make, and which, if they did make it, would ill comport with the rest of their utterances, nay, would be utterly belied by them.

This was the view held by Augustine, as expressed in a letter to Jerome (see Migne's *Patrologia*, Vol. xxxiii, p. 275, Epistola 82, alias 19, caput primum, § 3): "Tum vero sine ullo timore offensionis tanquam in campo luditur: sed mirum si nobis non illuditur. Ego, enim fateor charitati tue, solis eis Scripturarum libris qui jam canonici appellantur, didici hunc timorem honoremque deferre, ut nullum eorum auctorem scribendo aliquid errasse firmissime credam. Ac si aliquid in eis offendero libris, quod videatur contrarium veri-

tati ; nihil aliud quam vel mendosum esse codicem, vel interpretem non assecutum esse quod dictum est, vel me minime intellexisse, non ambigam. Alios autem ita lego ut quantalibet sanctitate doctrinaque præpolleant, non ideo verum putem, quia ipsi ita senserunt ; sed quia mihi vel per illos auctores canonicos vel probabili ratione, quod a vero non abhorreat, persuadere potuerint. Nec te, mi frater, sentire aliud existimo : prorsus, inquam, non te arbitror sic legi tuos libros velle, tanquam Prophetarum vel Apostolorum ; de quorum Scriptis, quod omni errore careant, dubitare nefarium est. Absit hoc a pia humilitate et veraci de temetipso cogitatione : qua nisi esses præditus, non utique diceris : *utinam mereremur complexus tuos et collatione mutua vel doceremus aliqua, vel disceremus.*"

The pious father clearly distinguishes between the Bible and all other books, however learned or holy. These are to be judged by their conformity to Scripture or to sound reason ; but the Bible has original authority as the norm of all truth, and cannot err. "If there occurs anything that seems repugnant to truth, I must believe either that the codex is faulty, or that the interpreter has not reached the correct meaning, or that I myself by no means understand it." And if the greatest of the Latin fathers, in some respects the greatest of all human teachers, could thus in pious modesty humble himself before the divine oracles, why shall we not cheerfully do the same ?

It follows also, if the view given of the prophetic function be correct, that no part of the Old Testament is due to the influence of ideas taken from Babylonian or Persian sources. It has been, and is, maintained by many that the early narratives in Genesis are due to the traditions found in the cuneiform texts which were obtained during the exile in Babylon. Now it is not necessary to dwell upon the difference between the simple, dignified and coherent narrative in the Hebrew text, and the confused, superstitious and polytheistic accounts exhumed from the ruins of Nineveh. If the Hebrew writers spoke from the mouth of God, they did not need, they could not receive, the traditions of men. Can anything be more absurd than the notion that men who believed they were under the immediate influence of the divine Spirit as teacher and guide, would undertake to supplement their own sacred history with materials taken from the religion of their cruel and idolatrous captors and oppressors ? The same question may be asked concerning the fond invention as to the sources of what is peculiar in the symbolism and other teaching of Daniel and Zechariah, and indeed of some of the earlier prophets. A great deal of superfluous learning has been exhibited to show that the doctrine concerning angels, dualism, resurrection and even the spiritual vision of God, were developed

in Israel by the aid of Zoroastrian influences. Dr. Cheyne does not hold the hypothesis of borrowed beliefs, but affirms that the views in question existed in germ among the Israelites, but their development was hastened by the constant intercourse of the Jews with the Persians, so that there came from without "not indeed entirely fresh intuitions, but stimulus to thought, and, it may be, sometimes even forms of theological expression."* But even this modified way of stating the influence of ethnic faiths upon the Hebrew Scriptures is wholly inadmissible. It suits very well with the theory that the religion of Israel was a natural development, a gradual advance from the lowest forms of faith and worship up through various stages until at length an ethical monotheism was reached. But it does not suit with what lies on the face of the Scripture that the results in any given stage from the first to the last were not due to the activity of the religious principle in the hearts of the people, but to the grace of God leading Him gradually to reveal Himself more and more to the chosen race. This, and this alone, made the difference between Palestine and the regions around. One was illumined by a special disclosure from on high, the others were not. The channels of this disclosure were the prophets. These, as we have seen, were affected in style and mode of illustration by their individual temperament and their surroundings. Their speech gave token of the age in which they lived. But the substance of that speech came from above. It was what God made known, not what the prophet had studied out by his own efforts. And its claim on the hearers' attention rested on the fact the Lord had spoken.

Nor is it mere prejudice to insist upon this fact. It rests on substantial reason. There is a prevalent tendency to minimize the peculiarities of revelation, to break down the distinction between Jew and Gentile, or between Christian and heathen, to merge special grace in general providence, to conciliate the world by lowering the claims of the Church, and to make the difference between the Scriptures and other so-called sacred books one of degree and not of kind. Nothing is really gained by such a course, but on the contrary much is jeopardized. Revelation, just because it is revelation, makes an exclusive claim on men's attention and reverence. It cannot share that claim with any other, without lessening its strength and weakening its grasp upon man's intellectual and moral nature. If it is but one of many ways in which God made Himself known to man, then its statements have to be compared with others in order to reach a solid result, and that is fatal to the authority of whatever claims to be an oracle of the living God.