

# THE PRESBYTERIAN AND REFORMED REVIEW

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## I.

### CHRISTIANITY AND THE EXPERIMENTAL METHOD.

**I**N a scientific age like ours, something will be gained if we can show that Christianity is amenable to the Experimental Method. This method has very largely made the modern world. It received its great exposition and impulse from Lord Bacon, and is sometimes called the Baconian method. It consists of three stages: first, the collection of all the facts procurable upon the subject in hand; secondly, the casting about for some happy hypothesis to explain the facts; and, thirdly, the verification of the hypothesis by experience or experiment.

Now it so happens that Christianity may be made amenable to this method; and, that there may be no mistake about this being the Founder's intention, let us look at one declaration He made in the days of His flesh. His enemies had, strange to say, argued themselves into the idea that He deserved to be killed because He had made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day (John vii. 23). They illustrated in doing so the fact that, if we only set ourselves to it, we can argue ourselves into anything. The history of human thought shows that there is nothing too absurd, nothing even too diabolical, to be reached by argument. But Jesus has a better method to suggest than this one of everlasting discussion; and it is contained in the words, "If any man will [willeth to'—Revised Version] do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John vii. 17). He does not say, "If any man will *discuss* God's will in all its length and breadth, he shall know of the doctrine;" but if he will *do* it, he shall reach

## II.

### THE MESSIANIC IDEA IN THE PROPHETS.

WHEN the Apostle Peter, in opening the doors of the kingdom to the Gentiles, announced in brief terms to the centurion Cornelius the leading facts of the life, work and death of Christ, and added, "To Him bear all the prophets witness," he did not mean that every individual prophet makes specific mention of the Redeemer; but that this was the general drift of the prophetic teaching, this was the tenor of the entire Old Testament as a prospective revelation. The whole organism pointed forward to the future, and its aim and substance was never fully realized until Jesus of Nazareth appeared. Hence the chief means of winning the Jews to accept Christ has been to refer them to their own Scriptures, the witness of the prophets. This "witness" opens up a very interesting field, and one worthy of patient and profound attention. It is proposed, then, in the pages that follow to consider what the prophets were, their immediate aim, their ultimate object, and how they accomplished it, the fulfillment of their predictions, and the uses of the subject.

I. *What then were the prophets*, and what was the message they bore? They were specifically different from the persons who had the same name in other ancient religions. These were mere sooth-sayers, at times lifted up into ecstasy in which rational consciousness was suppressed and in some inexplicable way the power of divination was imparted. The Hebrew prophets, on the contrary, retained full possession of all their faculties, and in this condition were made the mouthpieces of the Almighty, which was the distinguishing characteristic of their office. They were the organs of the divine communication. Neither personal inclination nor natural endowment, nor any degree of human training, could make a prophet. It is true that there was in the days of Samuel and of Elijah and Elisha a sort of guild called "the sons of the prophets," in which the elements of a learned education were given; but whatever purpose these may have served, in no case was the utterance of the prophet the result of the instruction he received or the product of his own reflection. This was the characteristic of the false prophets. They spake out of their own hearts; they

followed their own spirit (Jer. xxiii. 16, Ezek. xiii. 2); they ran without being sent, and caused the people to err by their lies and their vain boasting. The true prophets always said, "Thus saith Jehovah," or, "The word of Jehovah came unto me saying," etc.; and they distinguished constantly and sharply between what came from God and their own views and desires. Their sole business was to deliver faithfully the message committed to them. In the delivery they used their natural powers and the style to which they had been accustomed. They differed greatly in intellectual endowment, as also in training and environment. The four greater prophets have each his characteristic peculiarities, but in one point they all agree. Each is an organ of divine inspiration. However unlike the form of utterance, what is uttered is the voice of God.

Yet, so far from being mere mechanical instruments of the inspiring Spirit, they were stirred by fear and hope, and were filled with sorrow or joy according to the purport of their message. And sometimes this appears where one would hardly expect to find it. Thus naturally a prophet when announcing the doom of his country's enemies would experience emotions of joy. Yet there are cases in which the speaker is so wrought up by the woes which he pronounces that he becomes full of a sympathetic sorrow. As Isaiah, foretelling the desolation of Moab (xvi. 9, 11), says, he waters Heshbon with his tears and his bowels sound like an harp. In like manner (xxi), when he has a grievous vision of the fall of Babylon, pangs take hold of him as the pangs of a woman in travail, his heart pants, he is affrighted with horror. He feels the woes he announces as though they were his own.

As to the ends which the prophets pursued, we are to distinguish between their immediate and their ultimate aim.

II. *Their immediate aim* was to meet the wants of the people of their time. The law had already been given, but there was need to apply and enforce it according to the varying circumstances of the people. Generally, owing to the wayward character of the nation, the prophets were called to the office of rebuke. There were times when prosperity led to the extremes of luxury and self-indulgence, when the rich ground the faces of the poor, when the widow and the orphan were neglected if not oppressed, when falsehood and fraud abounded, when crimes against social purity were fearfully prevalent, when, as Hosea (iv. 1) says, there was "no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land." In all such cases the prophets lifted up their voice like a trumpet, and delivered the message with which they had been entrusted. They refused to bow down before any human greatness. Nathan before David, Elijah before Ahab, Isaiah before Ahaz, were only

specimens of the whole class who never were afraid of man, whose breath is in his nostrils. Conscious of their high commission as spokesmen for God, they set forth His will with startling plainness and directness. They summoned men to repent and seek Jehovah's face, declaring that otherwise His wrath would overtake them. Especially were they severe upon formal worship. Sacrifice was no substitute for obedience, nor incense for righteousness. Iniquity and the solemn meeting, that is, the two combined, God could not away with. Apart from justice and mercy, thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil were of no value in His sight. The tendency of men in all ages, even our own, to substitute ritual for uprightness of life never was more signally rebuked than in the prophets of Israel.

The Apostle Paul traces the immorality of the heathen world to their impiety. The same conviction was cherished by the ancient messengers of Jehovah. Hence they insisted from first to last upon the unity, the spirituality, and the exclusive sovereignty of the Divine Nature. The Most High had no partners of His throne. Hence their merciless attacks upon every form of false worship, and the vehemence, the sarcasm, the ridicule with which they assailed idolatry, the bowing down to stocks and stones. Nor have their words become antiquated when we consider that even at this day the majority of the human race worship molten or graven images. But while the prophets insisted upon the supremacy of Jehovah, and bore witness against every degree of departure from His law, and proclaimed in awful terms the judgments He would inflict upon the obdurately disobedient, they also dwelt upon the brighter side of the subject. They spoke much of His tender mercy, His listening to the cry of the destitute, His patience, His long-suffering, His readiness to forgive. Some of their utterances are not exceeded by anything in the New Testament. What can surpass the richness of the promise, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool;" or the melting pathos of Hosea's words: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? my heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together: I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, for I am God and not man;" or the gracious exclamation of Micah (vii. 15), "Who is a God like unto thee that pardoneth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy."

This ethical teaching of the prophets still abides for our instruction, performing the office ascribed by the great critic of antiquity

to the tragic muse, that of purifying the heart by terror and pity, because it holds forth the goodness and the severity of God. It is fulfilled and illumined by the teaching of our Lord, but it is not superseded. It is still profitable "for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness." Matthew Arnold said with more truth than is common to his words on religious themes: "As long as the world lasts all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration, as to the people who have had the sense for righteousness most glowing and strongest; and in hearing and reading the words Israel has uttered for us, carers for conduct will find a glow and a force they could find nowhere else."

But besides their dealing with the present, the prophets had an outlook upon the future.

III. *Their ultimate aim* was to prepare for and aid in establishing the kingdom of God on the earth, that is, the appearance of a new life which working from within outwards would in the end transform every thing human—all family and social ties, all industry and commerce, all art and literature, all government and relations among peoples—till the kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ (Rev. xv. 15). This supreme end the prophets accomplished in various ways.

1. One was by *foretelling the doom of existing earthly empires*. These stood in the way of the kingdom of God. They frequently imperiled the existence of its nucleus, as that was found in the covenant people. They represented all that was opposed to its dominant characteristics. They were incarnations of brute force, or of wealth, or of worldly wisdom, and were alike debased in religion and corrupt in morals. Their superstition, selfishness, arrogance and immorality made them huge obstacles in the pathway of the kingdom. Hence the severe denunciations of the prophets and the energy with which they declared the certain and irrevocable overthrow of peoples and thrones which apparently stood at the highest point of dignity and power. This is the reason why so much space is given to the doom not only of the immediate neighbors of Israel, such as Moab, Ammon and Edom, but also of Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre and Egypt. They were concrete instances of what was said by Jehovah through Isaiah (ix. 12): "The nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish: yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." The certain destruction of this world's kingdoms, built on the foundation of force and fraud, was a pledge of the triumph of the kingdom of God, founded on truth and righteousness. The truth was finely presented in Nebuchadnezzar's vision, where the colossal image of gold and silver and brass and iron, each part representing one of the series of world-rulers, was struck by a

stone cut out without hands. The image was broken in pieces which the wind carried away, while the stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. The overthrow of the false was a necessary preliminary to the erection of the true.

2. Another way was by foretelling the *universal spread of the true religion*. The classic passage on this subject is the fine figure of Isaiah (ii. 1) and Micah (iv. 1), which represents the mountain of the Lord's house as exalted far above all other mountains, and so attracting the attention of the nations that they in a body seek this sacred shrine and offer themselves in willing subjection to Israel's God. In consequence of this swords are beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning-hooks; nation lifts not sword against nation, neither do they learn war any more. Similar is the prediction in the last chapter of Zechariah, that all the nations will go up yearly to Jerusalem for worship, and so will form with Israel one great festive church, celebrating the feast of Tabernacles. Under these forms taken from the existing relations of the Old Testament church the prophets were wont to express their notion of the universality of the perfected kingdom of God. They took up and expanded according to the circumstances of their time the primal promise made to Abraham that in his seed all the earth should be blessed. Sometimes hostile powers are represented as undergoing a total revolution, as when Isaiah speaks of Assyria and Egypt united closely with Israel, and both blessed and made a blessing in the earth, or the 87th Psalm enumerates Rahab and Babylon, Tyre and Philistia with Cush as registered in the City of God, and made partakers of all its spiritual and saving mercies. Again, the nations at large are made the inheritance of Zion's King, and the uttermost parts of the earth His possession. His kingdom extends from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. The wild sons of the desert, the merchants of Tarshish, the far-off maritime coasts are eager to proffer homage and fealty. All kings are at last to fall down in submission to the new King; all nations are to do Him service. In every place from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, incense and a pure offering are to be offered to His name. Thus long before the classic peoples had even reached the idea of universal history the Hebrew prophets proclaimed with trumpet tongue the destined universality of the true religion.

3. A third method of forecasting the future reign of righteousness was in setting forth the *spiritual blessings to come*. Such was the striking prediction of Joel quoted by the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost—the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh without distinction of age or rank or sex. The influence which had been limited and partial in its degree and subjects should become uni-

versal. The pious wish of Moses ages before (Num. xi. 29), "Would God that all the Lord's people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!" was to meet with an illustrious fulfillment. In like manner Jeremiah announced the coming of a time when Jehovah would make a new covenant with His people. Then the declaration of God's preceptive will would no longer stand over against them on tables of stone as something formal and foreign, but would be written on their hearts and lodged in their minds so as to be no longer external but immanent, a living spring of thought, word and action. Similar is the promise in Ezekiel (xxxi. 31) that God would sprinkle clean water upon His people, which would not like a Levitical aspersion act only ceremonially and leave them inwardly as they were before, but be accompanied by a gracious transformation, taking away the heart of stone, cold, hard and stubborn, and replacing it by a heart of flesh, sensitive to God's Word and eagerly receptive of His grace. So Isaiah declares that in the coming time all Zion's children shall be taught of the Lord (liv. 13); no more pupils of carnal ordinances in which the truth was veiled, no longer the subjects of a rudimentary dispensation, but brought into intimate and life-long fellowship with the Most High, they should have the direct teaching of His Holy Spirit interpreting to them the person and the work of the Lord Jesus (Jno. vi. 45). In like manner Zechariah winds up his prophecies by declaring that the motto "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" engraven on the golden plate borne on the high priest's mitre should be inscribed even on the bells of the horses, and so far from being peculiar to the head of the hierarchy should belong to the kitchen pots of the household.

4. But the chief method by which the prophets sought to prepare the way of the Lord was by setting forth a *Person by whose agency the great change was to be effected*. Nowhere do we find in any one place a full delineation of the character and work of the Messiah or Anointed One, but at different times and by different persons particular traits are stated and emphasized as required by the situation. Sometimes this is made a ground of reproach as though Messianic prophecy were a collection of fragments, *dissecta membra*, having no real living connection with each other. But enlightened by the fulfillment in the person and work of the blessed Jesus, the writers of the New Testament and the whole Christian Church have had no difficulty in perceiving a wondrous consistency and unity in the entire series of Messianic statements. The prophets spoke and wrote as the exigencies of their times required, but a wisdom higher than their own guided each separate announcement so that all were found to cohere in a distinct and well-defined personality.

This person united in Himself all three of the great offices that

existed among the covenant people—the prophetic, the priestly and the kingly. He was a prophet like unto Moses, but greater than he, for the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. He was a priest, of whom all previous priests from Aaron down were only types. And He was a King, far exceeding all other kings in the extent and duration of His kingdom. It is very true that the promised deliverer is represented more frequently and more strikingly in His royal office than either in His prophetic or priestly function. But this may be due to the fact that the former was more capable of full and varied description than the latter, and was more needed by the suffering condition of the people of God. But there is no doubt that all three of the offices were distinctly announced as held by Him.

As to His appearance in the world we have a multitude of details. He does not come straight from heaven, but is to be born of a woman and that in a low condition. The famous trilogy of Isaiah (vii, ix, xi) tells us that He is to be virgin-born, and His name is Immanuel (God with us); that although a child He shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace; and that though a mere root-shoot from the fallen trunk of David, He is to be wonderfully endued with the Spirit of Jehovah, and through His influence the earth shall be full of the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters cover the sea. The place of His birth is mentioned, a small village in Judea; and the scene of His teaching ministry is specified on the northern frontier. His personal character is said to be holy and unblemished, and at the same time unobtrusive, as He does not cry, nor lift up nor cause His voice to be heard in the streets. Yet His mouth is like a sharp sword, and He knows how to sustain with words him that is weary. Nor is He destitute of power, for before Him the eyes of the blind are opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame man leaps as an hart and the tongue of the dumb sings. Yet despite His excellence He is despised and rejected of men. At last He is betrayed by one of His disciples and falls into the hand of foes who deride Him, give Him gall for His drink, and pierce His hands and His feet by a painful and ignominious mode of punishment, after His back has been furrowed by a scourge. He dies between felons, and is buried. And yet He lives. His soul has been made an offering for sin, and in token of its acceptance He prolongs His days and sees of the travail of His soul. He divides the spoil with the strong. Then begins the full execution of His Kingly office. The little one becomes a thousand, the small one a strong nation. It is too light a thing simply to restore the preserved of Israel, the man once despised and abhorred becomes a light to the far-off Gentiles. Kings see and

arise, princes and they worship. Zion astonished at the change asks in wonder, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" All the ends of the earth turn unto the Lord. The abundance of the sea and the wealth of the nations are poured into His treasury. And finally the kingdom and the dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole Heaven are given to Messiah and His people.

Great as these utterances are, they were exactly and abundantly fulfilled.

IV. *Fulfillment.* It appears that in the Biblical Apocrypha no mention is made of the Messiah. But however that may be accounted for, it is certain that at the commencement of our era, there was a general expectation among all classes of the Jews, rulers or subjects, learned or ignorant, that there would come one who would prove to be a final and authoritative teacher, a beneficent and universal monarch. Hence we find throughout the Gospel histories a constant reference to our Lord as fulfilling the ancient prophecies of Scripture. The flight of His parents into Egypt is recorded as exemplifying Hosea's words: "Out of Egypt have I called my son." Herod's slaughter of the innocents at Bethlehem reminds Matthew of Jeremiah's prediction of Rachel weeping for her children at Ramah and refusing to be comforted. Christ's forerunner, John the Baptist, is said to have been foretold by Isaiah as,

"The voice of one crying in the wilderness,  
Make ye ready the way of the Lord."

In His own city, Nazareth, the Saviour applied to Himself Isaiah's remarkable words,

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor."

His abode in Galilee is regarded as fulfilling Isaiah's brilliant promise (ix. 1) to

"The land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali,  
Toward the sea, beyond Jordan,  
Galilee of the Gentiles."

When he performed miracles of healing, it brought to Matthew's mind the words of Isaiah, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases." In like manner his avoidance of popular clamor reminded the same evangelist (xii. 17) of what was foretold by Isaiah of the servant of the Lord upon whom Jehovah would put His Spirit,

"He shall not strive nor cry aloud,  
Neither shall any one hear his voice in the streets."

Did our Lord on one occasion speak nothing but parables, the evangelist quotes a prophet as saying,

“ I will open my mouth in parables.”

And Jesus Himself in justifying His use of parables cited the remarkable prediction of Isaiah that men should thoroughly hear, yet in no wise understand, and carefully see, yet in no wise perceive, and so even their greatest privileges would be of no use. When He made His one public and formal entry into Jerusalem, surrounded by applauding crowds, he fulfilled Zechariah’s peculiar prophecy,

“ Tell ye the daughter of Zion,  
Behold ! thy king cometh unto thee,  
Meek, and riding upon an ass.”

He Himself applied to His own rejection by the people the words of the Psalmist (Matt. xxi. 42),

“ The stone which the builders rejected,  
The same was made the head of the corner.”

The same implication is very strong in the argument from the 110th Psalm (Matt. xxii. 44),

“ Jehovah said unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand,  
Until I make thine enemies thy footstool,”

with which Christ shut the mouths of the Pharisees so that no man durst from that day forth ask Him any questions. His prediction that His arrest would scatter His disciples was confirmed by an appeal to the words of Zechariah : “ I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of his flock shall be scattered abroad.” And the treason of Judas was said by Him to have been foretold in the Psalm : “ He that eateth my bread lifted up his heel against me ” (Jno. xiii. 18). In His crucifixion, the gibes of His enemies, the disposition of His garments, His experience of thirst, His own expiring cry and the spear-thrust of the soldier, all referred back to what had been put on record ages before. It is clear then that the biographers of our Lord considered that He came, and lived, and taught and wrought mighty works, and suffered, and died and rose again, in fulfillment of the utterances made by the prophets of the old dispensation.

This truth was the burden of Christ’s instructions after His resurrection. Thus He said to the two disciples whom He joined on their way to Emmaus : “ Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into his glory ? ” Then, “ beginning from Moses and from all the prophets he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” Subsequently He repeated the same process with all the disciples, reminding them of His former teachings that all things must needs be fulfilled which are written in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms concerning

Him, and opening their mind that they might understand the Scriptures. Especially He pointed out that it was written that the Christ should suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name unto all the nations (Luke xxiv. 26, 27, 44-47). The pattern thus set by the Master was faithfully followed by all His disciples. On and after the day of Pentecost, each of them made the central theme of His discourses that Jesus the crucified was the one promised by the prophets of old, and therefore made by God both Lord and Christ. This was the burden of the long address made by Stephen, the proto-martyr. When Philip found the eunuch reading the prophet Isaiah and asking of whom the prophet spake in the fifty-third chapter, "he opened his mouth and beginning from this Scripture preached unto him Jesus" (Acts viii. 35). And in all Paul's journeys he is seen pursuing the same course which he did at Thessalonica, where, entering into the synagogue, he reasoned with the Jews from the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it behooved the Christ to suffer and to rise again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom he proclaimed is the Christ. The same thing appears in the epistles. Paul opens his Epistle to the Romans by describing himself as "separated unto the Gospel of God which he promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh." Peter, in his first epistle (i. 11), says that the Spirit of Christ which was in the prophets "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow them." The Epistle to the Hebrews is a continuous application of the priestly functions and prophetic utterances of the Old Testament to the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Apostle John, in his Apocalypse, makes the significant declaration (xix. 10), "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

It is clear then that these holy men viewed the correspondence between the Old Testament and the New, not as a series of undesigned coincidences or as a result of happy conjecture or wonderful foresight of what was to come, but as showing that each was part and parcel of one entire self-revelation of God extending through centuries, the former portion foreshadowing the latter, and thus constituting a volume which has and can have no parallel in the literature of the world. Its human authors were many and widely separated in time and place, but its divine Author was one and the same from age to age. The second part then is the fulfillment of the first, and its teachings are a key to all the antecedent history.

V. *The Uses of the Prophecy.* 1. *The first one is Apologetical.* The external evidences of Christianity are, as they have been for ages, Miracles and Prophecy. And of the latter the case of the

Messiah is the most conspicuous, because the correspondence between prediction and fulfillment is so exact, and because the circumstances are such as to show beyond doubt that there was a divine foresight of the future. The prediction was one opposed to the prevailing habit of thought among the ancients. They all agreed in placing the golden age in the remote past, never in the future. There had been a time when all was prosperous and peaceful and joyful, but there followed a decay of manners and morals, and this led to disaster. The progress was ever from bad to worse, and no one could tell how a change could be introduced. But in Israel the case was otherwise. There had been a halcyon period at the beginning which was soon interrupted by a widespread and deep-seated calamity. This, however, was not to continue unbroken. A time would come when the traditions of Paradise would be restored. This was to be accomplished through Israel, and the hope thus engendered became the central thought of the covenant people, age after age rendering it more distinct and clear till, as we have seen, the result was a body of prediction such as is not even approached in any other people. Nor can it be said that the prediction was such as to secure its own fulfillment. The exact contrary was the case. The contemporaries of our Lord had their minds fixed upon a carnal conqueror, one who by force of arms should overthrow the Roman oppressor and lead forth the people of Israel to a series of worldly triumphs. Hence, instead of welcoming Jesus of Nazareth, they rejected Him, and finally accomplished His death, thus, indeed, fulfilling the old prophecies, but without any such intention on their part. Hence it is impossible to look upon the Christ as a product of His age. As well might one regard a luxuriant palm-tree as a product of the snows of Greenland.

But of late serious objection has been made to the validity of the argument drawn from this source. It is said that whatever may have been the divine purpose in authorizing any prophecy, such prophecy had only the sense in which, at the time of its utterance, it could be understood. It never can be immediated, *i. e.*, stand in no organic connection with ideas already present to the mind of the prophet. Otherwise it is a mechanical, magical operation of the Spirit of God. Hence it is maintained that the prophet was limited by the horizon of his own time, and could never see farther than the point to which the present—viewed in the light of the divine purpose—carries the future in its bosom. Consistently with this view, we are told that Old Testament prophecy does not represent Messiah as in a proper sense a high priest, nor does it know of a Messiah who suffers and dies. Indeed, the prophets, being in all cases governed by the historical situation of their period, described

only an ideal Messiah of whom merely certain features are to be found in the New Testament fulfillment.

But to us these views seem entirely arbitrary and unreasonable, as well as the postulate upon which they rest. What is there magical or mechanical in the process by which God informs His servants of events which are to occur centuries afterwards, and which stand in no immediate relation to the existing situation of the prophet? It is quite enough if they reveal the divine glory and bear upon the future welfare of the covenant people. The notion that such disclosures must relate to the outward position of Israel at the time arises simply from the view of prophecy as a natural development of human genius or piety. Once admit the reality of divine revelation, and all such limitations are seen to be needless. Nor can the express statements of prophecy be accounted for on this view. Micah foretold that the new ruler would come forth from Bethlehem, just as His great ancestor had done. How did that statement link itself with the prophet's personal conditions at the time? Isaiah declared that the region peculiarly illumined by the presence of the Wonderful Counselor would be one formerly held in contempt, the frontier tribes of Zebulon and Naphtali. How did this prediction of the Galilee where Christ taught and performed mighty works bear upon the ethico-religious condition of either prophet or people at the time it was uttered? It could just as well have been made by Joel a century before, or Jeremiah a century after, or by one of the post-exilian prophets.

Nor is it true that Messiah is not represented in His priestly office. David in the 110th Psalm calls Him an Eternal Priest after the order of Melchizedek; Isaiah (liii. 10, 12) says He shall make His soul an offering for sin and intercede for the transgressors; and Zechariah (vi. 13) says expressly that He shall be a priest upon His throne.

Still less is it the fact that the prophets know nothing of His suffering condition. The 22d Psalm presents "to every Christian eye an unmistakable picture of the crucified Christ surrounded by his triumphant foes," as Riehm himself says (p. 312). Zechariah speaks of Him as derided, smitten and pierced. And Isaiah, in a well-known chapter, gives a most affecting picture of Him as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, despised and rejected of men, oppressed and afflicted, hounded even to death, although He had done no violence, neither was deceit found in His mouth. Ten times is it said that His sufferings were not on His own account, but borne for others. But the consentient voice of Christendom on this point is denied, and it is maintained that this refers not to an individual, but to the pious part of the nation who are evidently meant by the

phrase, "my servant" (lii. 13). But this cannot be the case. For (1) the pious people were not sinless, nor (2) has it been shown that they suffered more than the rest of the nation, nor (3) did they die and live again, nor (4) do the terms Isaiah uses admit of being applied to a corporate personality, nor (5) does the text suggest anywhere a distinction between the better and the worse part of the nation, but, on the contrary, in verse 6 puts a direct opposition between one person and *all* the rest. It is indeed true that Isaiah employs the phrase "servant of Jehovah" to denote at one time the Messiah and at another the covenant people; but the proper and rational explanation of this usage is that the term denotes the Messiah with the Church, which is His body, and sometimes the head is intended and sometimes the members—a usage that is not without its analogy in the New Testament (1 Cor. xii. 12). In the chapter before us the whole tenor of the account leads to the conviction that the vicarious sufferer is Messiah in person. There is, then, the statement of a suffering Messiah in the Old Testament. That it was overlooked by the great body of the Jewish people is certain, but this was not because it was not set forth plainly enough, but because they were carnally minded and had their souls filled with the vision of a worldly conqueror who would bring the whole earth into subjection to the seed of Abraham. But their neglect or unbelief does not invalidate the truth of the prediction. That is wonderfully illustrated in the Gospel narratives, which relate the sufferings of Christ and the glories that followed—the latter being expanded and illumined in each of the eighteen subsequent centuries. The suffering Messiah has become the triumphant Messiah. The cross, the mark of infamy, has proven the wisdom of God and the power of God to a multitude that no man can number.

2. *It Exhibits the Glory of God as Sovereign.* Human history is not a fortuitous series of isolated occurrences. It is not a record of violent and successive alternations involving no principle and having no meaning. Amid all its complex developments and strange fluctuations, it is the orderly unfolding of one consecutive plan which takes in all nations and races, and guides them to a final and worthy end. This, the true philosophy of history, is now universally recognized by men not biased by theories nor swerved by passion. It is the only view that satisfies at once the reason and the heart, although it is only in modern times that it has been brought to light. The classic historians and philosophers cared only for the particular countries to which they belonged, and took no thought of those whom they were accustomed to call Barbarians. Yet in the obscure province of Judea we find the large and liberal view of our own day underlying the whole system of things. While its

institutions were the most conservative of which we have knowledge, its outlook was to the ends of the earth. It had a succession of teachers who were able to take in at once the near and the far-off, whether in time or space, and who viewed all men and all events in their relation to one ultimate issue. They did this not by virtue of their own foresight, penetration and sagacity, but because they were messengers of the Holy One of Israel, who is at the same time the Alpha and the Omega, which is and which was and which is to come, the Lord God Almighty. He rules in the affairs of men. He sets up one kingdom and puts down another. Men act freely, yet their very caprice and willfulness have been controlled by an overmastering wisdom which amid apparent lawlessness and unconscious agencies has wrought out its own end. No part of the great historic drama of this world shows more clearly the wisdom and the power of His rule than the Messianic idea of the ancient prophets and the way in which it was worked out. The combination of each prophetic hint from Moses to Malachi in our Lord's person and history, as well as the movements of stately empires across the stage of Daniel's vision, alike declare the presence of Him who is great in counsel and mighty in work.

3. *It Encourages a Rational Optimism.* Every true Christian is an optimist. Not because he believes in the natural perfectibility of the race, or has some new patent for the reorganization of society, or imagines the existence of some blind law operating in this direction, but because the past is a secure pledge of the future. This world is under the government of its Creator, for whom nothing is too hard. He has promised a time when war shall give way to peace, oppression to justice, despotism to the rights of man, and selfishness to benevolence; when the sense of brotherhood shall be the law of human intercourse; when all temporal ends shall be subordinate to those which are spiritual and eternal; and the whole world shall bow to Him whose hands were once outstretched upon the accursed tree. This indeed is a brilliant prospect, and one that seems diametrically opposed to what we see around us every day. But it is not harder to conceive or execute than what took place in the beginning of our era when the Messiah first appeared. The hand that shaped events, large and small, civil and political, so that just in the fullness of time Christ was born of a woman, and fulfilled to the letter all that was written of Him ages before, is able to carry the Incarnation forward to its destined end in the conquest of the whole earth for the Gospel. Christ has come just as the old prophets foretold. He laid the foundations of His Church deep and strong, and upon them has arisen a superstructure without a rival in the world's history. With all its drawbacks it encloses the

mightiest powers now at work on the earth's surface. More than half of the population of the globe is controlled to-day by Christian hands. The small grain of mustard seed has become a tree of wide-spreading branches. The little leaven has pervaded the greater part of the lump. What remains to be accomplished is no greater than what has been. *Vexilla Regis prodeunt*—forward the royal standards go, nor can either earth or hell hinder their advance. There will be difficulties and antagonisms as there always have been, but still believers may sing with him of old,

“ Why do the heathen rage?  
And the peoples imagine a vain thing?  
He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh;  
The Lord shall hold them in derision.”

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