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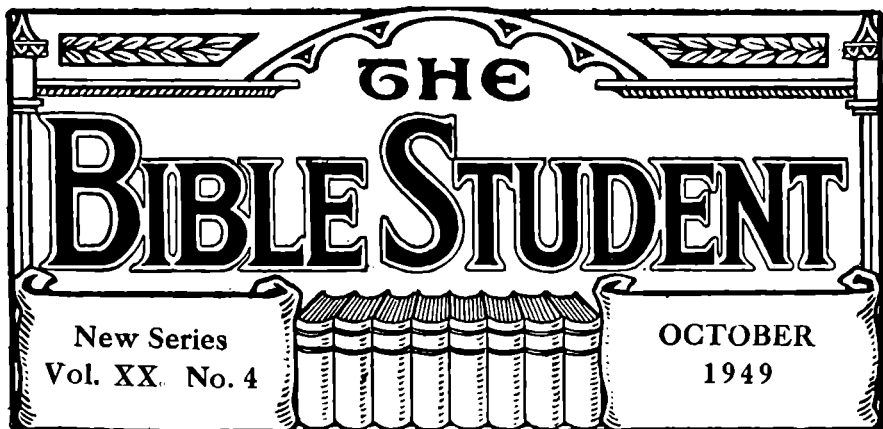
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THE WITNESS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

•BY D. M. M'INTYRE, D.D.

A leading critic of the Old Testament writes: "Opinions of the abiding validity of the Old Testament were held by the Apostles along with a very strict belief in the inspiration of its text. In the inspiration of the letter of the Old Testament the Apostles sometimes appear to have as explicit a confidence as the Jewish doctors of their time." This admission is of value, for there can be no doubt that, whatever views regarding the authority of the Old Testament were entertained by the inspired writers of the New, they were the views which had been taught by Christ. Until recently the churches of the Reformation were content to receive the plain teaching of the Apostles as simply authoritative. Even now, if it be affirmed that the Apostles were "unable to free themselves from the strict views of inspiration which the Jewish schools enforced, and which seem to preclude all liberty of criticism," many sincere believers, many reverent scholars, are satisfied that the foundations which were built into the Living Rock by the Apostles of the Lord were well and truly laid. We cannot forget the solemn asseration of our Saviour, "I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me" (John 17:8).

Every student of the Bible must have observed that the great Messianic texts adduced by Christ form the bases of the doctrinal decisions committed to the Church by the Apostolic writers, and that these texts are treated by them in precisely the fashion in which they were handled by Him.

For example, our Lord affirmed that Psalm 110 was plainly and directly Messianic—"How doth David in spirit call (Christ) Lord" (Matt. 22:43)? Peter, on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:34), and again when writing to the strangers of the dispersion (1 Peter 3:22), Paul, in the climax of his great resurrection argument (1 Cor. 15:25), and the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. 1:13), all adduce the same passage, with an identical direction of thought.

Isaiah's "golden passion" (Isaiah 52:13—53:12) was referred to by our Lord as a true and intended prediction of His own

atonement sacrifice, "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in Me, 'And He was reckoned among the transgressors:' for the things concerning Me have an end" (Luke 22:37). The Evangelists Matthew and John, Philip the Deacon, the Apostles Peter and Paul, employ the same prophecy with precisely the same intention (Matt. 8:17; John 12:38; Acts 8:32, 33; Rom. 10:16; 1 Peter 2:22-24).

An examination of these and similar passages will prove that the New Testament writers are agreed in their estimate of the value of the Old Testament Scriptures, and in their method of interpretation. Amid all differences of understanding, training, and situation, there is a remarkable harmony, a common consent, which can only be explained by the undoubted fact that "the Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it."

Another point of importance is that the Apostles regard the Old Testament as homogeneous. It is manifold, and yet one. It has been given at sundry times and in divers manners, but it is filled with one Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus; in many tones it speaks one word, the Word of God.

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, for instance, there are at least twenty-four evident quotations from the Old Testament. With the exception of chapter 2:13, which is an address to God, the human author is invariably lost sight of. In all the other passages, God—Father, Son, or Spirit—is indicated as the speaker. Even such utterances as the sacred writers gave forth in their own names are attributed to God (for example, chaps. 2:13; 4:4; etc.). And the Holy Word, though it was spoken in a dispensation which had then fulfilled its purpose and was ready to vanish away, is listened to with the deepest reverence and is conceived as still living, and as possessed of eternal authority (chaps. 2:11; 3:7; 12:5; etc.).

Another illustration of this meets us in the remarkable treatment by Paul of the divine Covenant with Israel, given in Romans 9-11. The Apostle draws his proof-texts almost with indifference from the wide range of Scripture—from Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Kings, Job, Psalms, Isaiah (both parts), Hosea, Joel, Malachi. He seems to have no idea of any such progress in revelation as would confer a higher degree of authority on one portion of Scripture than on another. To him, as to our Lord, the Old Testament approved itself as of unbreakable integrity.

It would be unnecessary to remind anyone that the Apostles believed that the Holy Writings gave a correct account of the history of the chosen people, that is to say, that the history of redemption is accurately recorded in the Bible which Christ used and which we have received, were it not that one great labour of modern criticism is to show that the history is not credible as it stands.

According to some Higher Critics the story of Eden is "a myth moralized"; the account of Cain and Abel is "legend"; Enoch is "a solar myth"; the Deluge is "fundamentally a myth of winter and the sun-god." The marriage between Abraham and Sarah may be taken to "symbolize the political fusion between a southern Israelitish tribe and non-Israelitish clans to the south of Hebron." The relationship between Abraham and Hagar suggests "the close intercourse and at times political union between Egypt and Palestine." The record of the Divine covenant with Abraham is "the fiction of a promise given to the mythical ancestor" of Israel. The story of Melchizedec is "a fragment of a post-exilic midrash." The Bible account of the exodus and of the wilderness wanderings is "a legend which has long been mistaken for history." The appearance to Moses of Jehovah in the Bush is "legend." Then and long afterwards Jehovah was a tribal God, whose glory was "originally in the storm": that is, He was a Storm or Thunder God. The ten commandments were not given at Sinai, they were the outcome of "the teaching of the great prophets" whose discourses form part of Scripture. As for Moses, "Lawgiver in the traditional sense, as author of the Pentateuch, or as framer of a particular kind of government—the theocratic—Moses certainly was not." With regard to the histories of Elijah and Elisha it is very hard to recover "the kernel of literal fact." And so on.

Now, let anyone read the speech of Stephen recorded in the seventh chapter of the Acts, the incidental references to the history of Israel in the Epistle to the Romans, the commemoration of the worship and worthiness of the saints of the Old Covenant which we find in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and he will, I venture to say, feel that there is an irreconcilable difference between the estimate of the Old Testament writings by the Apostles of the Lord on the one hand, and on the other by modern critics.

Nor is that difference a matter of slight importance. The New Testament writers seem to have felt that the verity of the

record must be assumed before one could be satisfied that the revelation was indeed from God. They realize that the truth of the promise was involved in its temporal setting, that the scheme of redemption was woven into the very texture of the history of the chosen people. The flower of grace was folded within the protecting sheath of God's providential care: the pearl grew to perfect loveliness within the shell. In a word, the New Testament writers showed with sufficient clearness that it is impossible to volatilize the history of the Old Covenant.

They tell us not merely that the paradise state is to be restored in the regeneration, when what we have lost in Adam shall be given again to us in Christ, but that that state was divinely ordered so that it might be to us a revelation of spiritual mysteries: "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones."

The sin of our first parents is treated as a fact of theology not less than of history: "By one man's disobedience many were made sinners"; "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive"; "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit" (Rom. 5:19; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45). The representation of Adam is spoken of as belonging to the same region of truth as the representation of Christ.*

The special promises of salvation by a Mediator which inhere in the covenant of redemption were made to Abraham on a certain given occasion, and with particular attendant circumstances. If Abraham was not an individual man, but a tribe, or a tradition, or "a free creation of unconscious art"—whatever that may be—the original covenant is destroyed, and the promises hang in air. The reasoning of the Apostle Paul on this point is most instructive; the scheme of redemption, as he interprets it, demands the historical setting of the promise—it necessitates the covenant of God with Abraham (Rom. 4:13 ff.; Gal. 3:6 ff.; 16 ff.).

The author of the fourth Gospel, after recording that the death of Christ had taken place before the *crurifragium*, continues, "For these things were done, that the Scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken" (John 19:36). The reference is of course to a ritual detail prescribed at the first recorded celebration of the Passover. The application of that detail to Christ "our Passover" not only authenticates the story of the

* Compare Calvin, "We can nowhere see with greater clearness what we possess in Christ, than when it is shown to us how much we have lost in Adam" (on Rom. v. 12).

paschal celebration on that night in Egypt, "much to be remembered," it alleges further that the rite, as instituted then, is full of evangelic significance.

The Apostle Peter lays upon believers the obligation of the New Covenant, and does so in these words, "It is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16). These were the words which Jehovah spoke to the children of Israel when, assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai, they received "the law of ordinances" from the hand of the mediator and lawgiver. The law of Moses, therefore, is not merely "a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," it is part of the gospel by which we live. And the incidents of the exodus and the wilderness wandering, being inextricably connected with the ratification of the covenant, are more than related facts of history, they are a vital part of the revelation which has come to us from the Spirit of God.

The Epistle to the Hebrews is throughout a very remarkable proof, not only that the ceremonial law was received at the hand of Moses, but that it was a great Gospel sermon. As an artist may mould his thought in clay, and then proceed to chisel out in the marble of Carrara the conception which had already been fashioned in an uncouth material, so God inscribed the Gospel in the blood of bulls and goats before He wrote it in the great doctrinal texts of the New Testament. When we adore the Saviour of the world, we "sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb."

These words remind us that the whole Apocalypse is a mosaic of Old Testament speech; it is written throughout *in terms* of the ritual enjoined by Moses and realized in the tabernacle in the wilderness. All the Levitical ceremonial is affirmed as revelation; it is a transparent veil through which faith beholds the glory of the Lord. And the history of Israel is seen—not as a series of edifying legends and tales—but as an arc of the vast orbit of the Sun of Righteousness.

Only one thing more need be set down under this head. The leading texts which are used to prove the inspiration of the Holy Writings will occur to the recollection of every careful reader of the Bible. All of these texts give us some enlightenment regarding the operation of the Divine Spirit on the mind of the writers, they are therefore confirmed and illustrated by all our study of the Sacred Word. A brief reference may be made to three familiar texts.

An emphatic utterance of the Apostle Paul—2 Tim. 3:16—determines for us the *scope of inspiration*. Whether we read it in the Authorised Version or in the Revised, it assures us that inspiration extends to the earliest, to the least ethical, to the most secular of all the sacred writings—“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Or, if you will, “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness.” In the one case the extent of inspiration is asserted, in the other it is implied, and the implication is made the ground of a further statement. That is to say, we have in this text the declaration of an inspired Apostle that the Old Testament is, in its harmony and completeness, *the Word of God written*. But, it may be asked, Is the imperfect statute law of Israel, are the speeches of Job’s miserable comforters, is the sad monologue of the Preacher, really the Word of God? An answer, partial, perhaps, but true, to questions such as these, is, that we must—as I have already indicated—regard the Scriptures in their harmony and completeness. The Bible is an organism: cut it anywhere, and it will bleed.

In his second Epistle the Apostle Peter gives us a mere suggestion regarding the *manner of inspiration*, “Men spake from God.” They “spake”—the tense shows that the Apostle is thinking chiefly, if not exclusively, of the writers of the Old Testament books. They “spake” as men—holy men, it is true—men on whom the Spirit of holiness rested—but not the less human because their personality was bathed in the Being of God. They “spake,” each one in accordance with his natural disposition, his training, his knowledge, his circumstances—the religious experience of each furnishing, or at least suggesting, the subject-matter of his discourse. But they “spake”—from God. They “spake” of another than themselves, of One whose shadow fell upon the path of their goings, whose image mirrored itself in the hidden transparencies of their life. And so it came to pass that as they wrote of that which they had seen with their eyes, which they had looked upon, and their hands had handled of the Word of Life, they wrote of Him. “Now the glass,” says Bunyan, “was one of a thousand. It would present a man, one way, with his own features exactly, and, turn it but another way, and it would show one the very face and similitude of the Prince of Pilgrims Himself.”

Men "spake" of Christ, and, as they spake, He was seen of them, arrayed in garments battle-soiled and dipped in blood—and on His vesture and on His thigh was a name written—a name which all men might read, and no man might know—"THE WORD OF GOD."

In his first Epistle the same Apostle gives, not a definition of the mode of inspiration—a definition of the interaction of the Divine and the human is in all cases beyond our comprehension—but an additional hint in virtue of which we may see a little way into that which must ever remain hidden in the secret of God. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you" (1 Peter 1:10-12).

The sacred writers gathered their materials with care, they searched into old records, they used all customary means to win reliable information; they found the darkness and the glory of their prophetic visions in their own religious life and in that of their contemporaries; they wrote of the Old Covenant as those who were partakers of its transitory promises. But there was always a *something more*—a golden thread shining in the sad colour of their tapestry; a shaft of light streaming down upon an austere and sombre earth. And this something more was always *something of Christ*. It was conferred upon them by the Spirit of Inspiration, whom the Apostle calls "the Spirit of Christ," the Spirit who is always silent except when He speaks of that Chosen One. Each writer had learned only a little about Him who was at once the burden of prophecy and the light of the prophetic vision. These "holy men of old" therefore turned from their own to the other sacred writings, and ever, as they saw some faint gleam that shone from the never-setting sun, bent once more over the prophecy which they themselves had spoken. And so the light grew around them until each one was enabled to trace with searching eyes the name Emmanuel written off the fringes of the priestly robe of Him who was to come.—*The Bible League Quarterly*.