

## Interpretation of Messianic Prophecy.

A SERMON PREACHED AT THE CHURCH OF ST. MARY-THE-VIRGIN, OXFORD, ON  
SUNDAY AFTERNOON, 11TH MARCH 1900.<sup>1</sup>

BY THE REV. G. H. GWILLIAM, B.D., FELLOW OF HERTFORD COLLEGE.

'They shall look on him whom they pierced.'—  
John xix. 37.

THE formula 'another scripture saith' (ἑτέρα γραφή λέγει), which introduces the words of our text, indicates a quotation from the Old Testament; for in most of the passages where it is employed it precedes a direct citation of Old Testament words. There are exceptions to this usage. In chap. 7<sup>38</sup> and 4<sup>2</sup> the same formula introduces words which are not literal quotations from any part of the Old Testament. In these cases 'says' (λέγει) indicates the substance of Old Testament teaching rather than any actual utterance. But in our text, and in the verse which precedes, there are two direct citations. 'These things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken'—the reference is to Ex 12<sup>46</sup>. 'And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced.' This we all recognize as also a direct quotation; and the words recall two passages. There are the familiar words of Ps 22<sup>16</sup>, 'The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.' Whatever may be the true reading of the present Hebrew text, a reading 'pierced,' or some synonymous expression, was known in the days of St. John, as is witnessed by the *oruxan* (ὄρυξαν) of the LXX, which the *bazzā* of the Peshitto confirms. But what proof is there that St. John and his companions read their Psalms in the Septuagint? Perhaps, being men of Galilee, they knew the Aramaic paraphrase. That has, 'Biting, like a lion, my hands and my feet'; and the quotation in our text cannot be referred to such a rendering. But this much we may say, a disciple who was familiar

with any text of the 22nd Psalm would not fail to note the striking coincidences between the ancient description of the sufferer and the events of his Master's martyrdom. He might have heard the Crucified One cry out to God, in words identical with the opening words of the Psalm. He might have seen in the exposure to public insult, and in the parting of the Sufferer's clothing, realizations of the Psalmist's graphic descriptions of shame and maltreatment.

But if there be in our text an indirect allusion to the 22nd Psalm, there is a more distinct reference to the words of the prophet in Zec 12<sup>10</sup>: 'And they' (that is, the inhabitants of Jerusalem) 'shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son.' To these words, in their primary import and in the use of them by the evangelist, I would now invite your attention.

It is satisfactory to find that we can proceed to examine the meaning of the prophet's words without hindrance on the threshold, through question of date and dispute about authorship. From such controversies, indeed, in many cases, clearer views have been obtained of the purpose of Old Testament writings. Historical researches have resulted in presenting to us the ancient writers and their times in pictures more true to life, and, therefore, more helpful towards a due appreciation of their work, their aims, and their achievements. Yet it cannot be denied that, in other cases, the effect of modern criticism is to destroy, for those who accept the results, the prophetic character of the passages, either by denying their supposed predictive force or by impugning the Messianic reference. Yet, though much has been deprived of its ancient significance, many a passage still remains, which is only intelligible when viewed in the light of the events of the life of Christ. Call them 'wonderful adaptations,' speak of the fulfilment 'as a providential accommodation to the

<sup>1</sup> One of the Oxford University Afternoon Sermons in Lent is to be preached 'upon the application of the prophecies in Holy Scripture respecting the Messiah to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, with an especial view to confute the arguments of Jewish commentators, and to promote the conversion to Christianity of the ancient people of God'—a benefaction for this purpose having been given in 1848 by J. D. Macbride, D.C.L., Principal of Magdalen Hall. The preacher is appointed by the Vice-Chancellor.

terms of prophetic utterance,' explain them as you may, they abide as imperishable features of the most marvellous of all the 'sacred books of the East.' Of such is the passage in Zechariah, which is quoted by St. John in our text.

When we venture to disregard, on the present occasion, questions of authorship and of date, we do not forget that differences of opinion exist; but we point out that they are immaterial in reference to the exegesis of this passage. The case is entirely different from, for example, the case of the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah. When these are transferred from the days of the son of Amoz to the era of the Captivity, the predictive character of the reference to Cyrus is destroyed; but if we ascribe the last part of Zechariah to Jeremiah, or any other pre-exilic prophet; or, having regard to an apparent difference of style, we suppose another writer, contemporary with the son of Berechiah, then in the one case we get an earlier date than the traditional, in the other a period not later; and in both cases the result is immaterial, for no one doubts that the words of Zec 12<sup>10</sup> were part of the text of one of the canonical books of the Old Testament for several generations before He appeared to whom St. John refers them. Higher criticism leaves the significance of this passage untouched.

But lower criticism presents considerations which become difficulties in following the evangelist's application of the prophet's words. What is the true reading of the Hebrew? Did the prophet say, 'Look unto *me*,' or 'unto *him*'? What is the meaning of the relative translated 'whom,' and the verb rendered 'pierced'?

He who attempts to settle the reading and translation of this passage has little now to add to what has long been known to scholars. We have no new MS. to advance in evidence of the true reading, as between *élai*, 'unto *me*,' and *élaiu*, 'unto *him*.' No gloss has been found in an ancient codex declaring how the *dakaru*, rendered 'pierced' in our Bible, was understood by Christians of ancient days, to whose ears Hebrew was still a living language, and when some form of Semitic was the mother-tongue of thousands of believers. We can but state this afternoon the grounds of our preference.

1. First, as to the reading. The present Hebrew text has *élai*, 'they shall look upon, or unto *me*'; but, as the Revisers of our Authorized Version in-

form us in their margin, some MSS read *élaiu*, 'unto *him*.' Yet they retain *me* in their translation, and rightly, it would seem, in view of the preponderance of diplomatic evidence, with the support of the versions and other ancient authorities.

2. Next, as to the rendering of the Hebrew *éth äsher*, which follows *me*. It has been contended that the pronoun with prefixed particle is equivalent to *because*, or, *on account of*. Certainly the LXX have rendered by *anþi hon* (*ἀνθ' ὧν*), and the Peshitto has followed them, as it so often does. Yet the Revisers have not allowed a change from the Authorized rendering, 'me *whom*,' and the general usage of the expression in the Old Testament seems to justify our taking it as equivalent to the accusative of the relative pronoun.

3. Thirdly, and more important, is the rendering of the next word *dakaru*, which in the Authorized and Revised Versions is translated *pierced*, but in the Septuagint by *katorchesanto* (*κατωρχήσαντο*). The literal meaning is *pierce*, or *thrust through*. It occurs in that sense in the familiar story of the death of Saul, *thrust through* with his own sword. In the next chapter of Zechariah (ver. 3) it is used, where we read, the father and mother of the prophet 'shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; . . . and shall *thrust him through*.' Once, in La 4<sup>9</sup>, it is used of death by hunger, but in the other ten places where it occurs, always of death by piercing.

On a review of the whole, then, we must conclude that, if we have regard solely to grammatical and textual criticism, we must understand the words of Zechariah as they have been understood for generations, 'They shall look upon me, whom they have pierced.'

But it may seem to some that the reading in Zechariah is settled by the authority of the evangelist in our text, when he says *opsontai eis hon exequentesan* (*ὄψονται εἰς ὃν ἐξεκέντησαν*). Now we grant that, irrespective of theological considerations, these words represent a reading which can claim greater antiquity than any extant MS. of Zechariah possesses. Yet a little reflexion will show that we cannot settle the Hebrew text of the Old Testament by means of the quotations in the New: there is not sufficient evidence of direct connexion between the latter and the former. It is indisputable that many quotations in the Greek New Testament are made from the Greek Old Testament. Such stand in much the same rela-

tion to the original as do the quotations from the Authorized English version in English books of divinity. Again, it would seem that readings of the Old Testament were extant in the first centuries, which can claim no support from any of the witnesses now available. Such readings we cannot admit, unless we are prepared to discard the testimony of manuscripts and versions. Further, as regards the evidence of the sacred writers of the New Testament, it appears that not seldom they varied the words they quoted, for some specific purpose. In order to enforce the particular meaning they assigned to a passage, they changed its terms, and cited it as with a gloss on the text. On this I would only now remark, in addressing an audience of Christian men, that, in our view, the writers of the New Testament were inspired teachers. Was it not part of their office to illumine with the stronger light of pentecostal days the less luminous places of Old Testament revelation? In the case of the quotation from Zechariah, which we are considering, the *me*, which seems to have been the word of the prophet, becomes *him* on the lips of the evangelist, and thereby points the reference to the Sufferer, under whose cross he had stood.

But it may be said that the context in Zechariah suggests, perhaps even necessitates, a different reading, and a modification of our rendering. The speaker through the mouth of the prophet is Jehovah. If we read *me*, for which we have contended, the rendering 'pierced' is inappropriate in its literal sense. The verb can only be used figuratively, and by that adaptation to human thought, which colours the language of revelation. The First Person of the Blessed Trinity may be 'pierced,' as the Second Person has spoken of Himself as 'persecuted' in His followers, and the Third Person is 'grieved' by the sins of those who are His temple. If, then, the prophecy of Zechariah anticipates a turning in penitence to the Creator; if, properly, it speaks of the Almighty Father, rather than of the Son Incarnate, the 'piercing' must be understood in a tropical sense, such as the rendering in the Septuagint seems intended to express, *epiblepsontai pros me anth' hon katorchesanto* (ἐπιβλέψονται πρὸς μὲ ἀνθ' ὧν κατωρχήσαντο). Would it not suit better the context in Zechariah if we were to adopt some such rendering?

Here two remarks may be made. First, as to the Septuagint rendering, it is by no means certain

that they intended to modify the Hebrew *dakaru* from the literal 'pierce' to the figurative 'insult'; quite as likely is it that they read by metathesis of letters *rakadu*, 'dance,' and translated it *katorchesanto* (κατωρχήσαντο), which would be a literal rendering, and would allow a figurative application. But this by the way.

Secondly, and what is far more important, we have to remember that a true biblical exegesis must take account of the strict and literal meaning of a passage or expression, as well as of the sense intended by the speaker, and accepted by his hearers. In the words of a famous dictum, we begin to study the Bible as any other book, but we soon find it unlike any other book. Its sentences transcend the immediate occasion. Its terms oft enclose a deeper meaning than the sense assigned to them by those who listened to Seer and Psalmist. Yea, the speakers themselves did not always fathom their own utterances.<sup>1</sup> Even the words of an angry mother, 'Cast out the bond woman and her son,' were prophetic of the call of Isaac and the children of promise.<sup>2</sup> Still more may we expect to find in the sublimer utterances of spiritual men some profound meaning, which was not at first apparent, but which has endured, for the Church to apprehend under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We do not argue for a mechanical inspiration; but we believe that the Holy Ghost spoke by the prophets. We do not define the mode, or measure the extent; yet we do not doubt that in moments of spiritual elevation the utterances of the prophets transcended the thoughts which occupied their minds. To Zechariah, and to his hearers, the words, we may well suppose, seemed to prophesy of the return of the people to their offended and insulted Creator, under the influence of the Spirit, which He would pour upon them. We look back upon events fulfilled, and know *how* that repentance was effected—through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem, which led the men of Israel to listen to the preaching of the cross, and look in penitence upon the pierced Son of Israel's God.

But the prophet proceeds in the third person, 'they shall mourn for him.' Does the *him* refer to the subject of *me*? Then would it not be better after all, to read *him*, and take the passage thus, 'They shall look on him whom they have slain, and they shall mourn for him?'

<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet 1<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Gal 4<sup>30, 31</sup>.

The difficulty is superficial, for every reader of the Old Testament knows that change of persons is constant in Hebrew poetry, and is a characteristic of the prophetic style. As little difficulty does it present to the Christian theologian, who in that 'pierced' One, and the use of the passage in St. John, sees the reference of the words to Christ. He who is pierced is one with Jehovah, who revealed Himself through the prophets. The truth, which the Christian learns through his New Testament, was adumbrated in the Old, and eminently in this place of Zechariah. In chapter 11 the Shepherd of the Lord seems sometimes identified with the Lord Himself. In chap. 13<sup>7</sup> He is addressed by Jehovah as 'the man that is my fellow.'

For Zec 12<sup>10</sup> is one of those prophetic passages which, viewed from whatever standpoint, are luminous with rays of prophetic anticipation. Jehovah speaks. The time cometh when the rebellious people shall mourn, beholding the pierced One. That piercing became a possible and literal event, when the Incarnate Son of Jehovah yielded His body to the nails and to the spear.

Or, if the word 'pierced' be taken of insult and contumely, then it received its deepest fulfilment in the treatment meted out to Him who, after a life of benevolence, was despised, blasphemed, rejected.

Or, if we take the words in the form of the quotation in the New Testament, 'look upon him' was fulfilled in the crowds who came together to behold the sight of the Only Son, the Son of Man, insulted, pierced, slain. Doubts about the exact meaning of the terms, or of the reading of the text, cannot invalidate the certain reference to Christ, and there is no need to have recourse to the scissors and paste-pot, and, following the startling suggestion commended in the sister University, cut out the words, and paste them in after the prediction of the slaying of the false prophet in the third verse of the next chapter.

But it may be thought that we are reading into the prophet's words a special and individual application, which they will not bear. In terms, they are certainly not specific; they are as general as piercing and wounding of body and spirit are general; as universal of application as the mourning they predict is common, and will be common to the end of time. Sons of Zechariah's nation

have died in numbers for the faith of their fathers; mothers in Israel have looked upon them and wept. Does not the prophet, in using the first person, identify himself with the slain heroes and martyrs of his people? Is not the 'mourning' rather a poetic forecast than a predictive and Messianic utterance?

But let us carefully consider the context. Chaps. 12, 13, 14, whether composed by the son of Berechiah, or the writings of an unknown author, form one piece, and are quite distinct from the preceding parts of the book, to which they are now attached. They contain a message for *Israel*. The interest centres in Jerusalem and the royal house of David, but the superscription enlarges the subject to embrace the whole nation as descendants of him who won for himself the unique title of 'Prince with God.' Many topics are included in the three chapters. They are not systematized as in a modern treatise; for the writings of the prophets, as they have come down to us, are, for the most part, fragments of their oral teaching. In these chapters we have a prediction of judgment; but the sorrows to come will be the strokes of fatherly chastisement, leading to Repentance. The Spirit will be poured out on the contrite; Atonement and Purification are provided; the ancient Prophesying, which had failed of its noble purpose, is abolished; God appears for the judgment of the nations, and the salvation of His people; the world is punished, but a remnant are saved and converted; Jerusalem becomes the centre of worship, in which the Feast of Tabernacles holds a conspicuous place.

And all through the unfolding of future events, a figure is revealed in mysterious outline and varying character. He is pierced and mourned for; He is the Shepherd, equal with God, yet smitten; He appears as a Deliverer on the Mount of Olives; in the regenerated land, the central Feast of Obligation will be the Feast of Tabernacles, which foreshadowed the Incarnation, by which the Fellow with God became the Shepherd.

The introduction of these allusions, in the midst of plain promises and predictions of temporal deliverance and spiritual blessing, is in harmony with the manner of the prophets. Some of the Jewish commentators had no hesitation in finding here predictions of the Messiah, though, to overcome the difficulty of the prophecy of suffering in this and other passages, they postulated two

Messiahs, one who was to suffer, while the other was to reign. In the word 'pierced,' the Christian finds a literal prediction of the manner of his Master's death. Yes, the words of Zechariah, though general in terms, become specific when viewed in their setting. And so St. John applies them. His Master had already applied words from the same prophecy in speaking of the coming dispersion of His little band, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad' — quoting from Zec 13<sup>7</sup>. Such applications of Zechariah's words become to us, as Christians, authoritative. The exegesis claims our obedient assent; yet, as we have shown, it is not arbitrary, but appeals to our reason; for it is supported by textual criticism, by study of context, by its consistency with the manner of prophetic utterance, and the presentment of Messianic prediction in other parts of Holy Writ.

The title of the sermon to be preached this afternoon supposes a controversy between the Christian teacher and some who are still outside the Christian fold. They recognize, as we do, the authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, which were their heritage when our forefathers were still strangers to the household of God. They hold, as we do, that God spake by the prophets; they believe that these predicted the advent of the Messiah; but they do not admit that those ancient Messianic prophecies were fulfilled in the Christ of the Christian faith. We have tried this afternoon to show the application of one of those prophecies to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And we have not dealt with an isolated instance. It is one of a series. Messianic prophecy, in the widest sense of the term, embraces typical acts, as well as predictive words. One text, explained and applied, may not convince; but the cumulative effect of so many adumbrations cannot be ignored. And so we say to our brethren of the older Covenant, 'See for yourselves, whether He, in whom we believe, has not fulfilled the predictions which, with us, you recognize to be the divine intimations of the work and person of Him who was to come.' So speaking, we echo the teaching of the Master Himself, who referred the inquirers to His works as attestation of His Messiahship. We do not attempt to *demonstrate* to the Jew that Jesus is the Christ—that were an impossible task. The

evidences of Christianity are not the elements of a mathematical demonstration. We may be mistaken in our exegesis of particular texts. We allow that Christian teachers are not agreed in the interpretation of some parts of prophecy. But we ask our Jewish brethren to consider, whether there is not a remarkable correspondence between the events of Christ's life and the predictions of the prophets; between the conditions of His personality and the Messianic character foreshadowed in ancient story, in sacrificial rite, in inspired utterance. The witness of prophecy is one of the most weighty of the evidences for Christianity. The inter-relations of the Old and New Covenant Scriptures are tokens of the divine origin of both. The Apocalypse, which closes the canon, returns in its imagery of the new heaven and earth to the days of creation, and restores to regenerated man the lost Tree of Life. In the gradual development of the idea of regeneration and salvation through the intervening ages, prophecy was a chief medium. We use the word in its widest sense. From Moses to Malachi spiritual men *spake forth* the spiritual and moral lessons, which each generation needed. They declared the truths of salvation for the righteous and punishment for the wicked, and thus predicted God's judgment of the world. In their writings we find the development of a hope of salvation through a Saviour yet to come. It was a hope sustained through ages, and yet not the mere repetition of an ancient tradition. As a living power the hope grew, and was presented in various forms by different prophets, and took the shape of definite Messianic prediction. The fulfilment of these prophecies became the test of Messianic claims. The evangelists justified their history of Christ's words and deeds by constant reference to the predictions in the Old Testament. The series of quotations, which commences with the prophecy of the Virgin birth in Mt 1 is consummated by the quotation of Zechariah's prophecy of the effect of the Atoning Death in our text, which is the last quotation in the Gospels from the Old Testament. These men had lived in the sound of the voice of that Word, of whom the ancient seers prophesied. He had expounded from the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

Taught by the Master, the apostles become *our* teachers, and direct us to find for ourselves, and

teach others to find, Christ in the Law, in the Prophets, in the Psalms. This is the message of the Christian Church to-day to the remnant of the Church of the circumcision. In a former generation the Church did not feel the call to deliver such a message. When this sermon was founded, missions to the Jews were supported by but few within our Church. Many did not see their way to co-operate, in what appeared to them the action of a party, rather than the outcome of Church life and zeal. But now, those who once held altogether aloof are promoting the same good cause, perhaps by different methods, but yet in recognition of a great Christian duty. The work is no longer to be regarded as the private effort of individual earnestness; it has received the commendation of the whole Anglican Episcopate. It seeks both its sanction and its inspiration from the very earliest missionary enterprises of the Christian Church. The Master who said, 'Go into all the world,' said also, 'Beginning at Jerusalem.' The first Christian sermon—we read it in the second chapter of the Acts—was intended 'to promote the conversion of the ancient people of God.' St. Peter, the preacher, following his Master's method, based his appeal on the fulfilment of a prophecy of God. The first sermon of the apostle to the Gentiles was addressed to Jews; and we read in Ac 13 that the preacher took for his theme the typical history of Israel, and declared that Jesus had come as a Saviour in fulfilment of the promise of God. And we who teach in this generation must follow the ancient lines, and proclaim our Master to be the Messiah of the Jew, as well as the Saviour of the Gentile, because in Him the promises of God have been fulfilled; because His life and character correspond to the features of the Deliverer to come, of whom Moses and the prophets wrote.

'They shall look on him whom they pierced.' The evangelist quotes the ancient prediction, as having become a fact through the cross on Calvary. His application of the words to Christ expresses a prophecy of continued fulfilment in the New Testament age. We have contended that the words of Zechariah are a Messianic prophecy, and applicable only and wholly to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We see the fulfilment of them commencing in the circum-

stances of His crucifixion, but continued in a nobler sense after Pentecost, when many of those who had clamoured for His blood, looked back with horror on their deed, and, repenting, were converted. We find the prophecy fulfilled in the mental gaze on Him, whom their sins have pierced, which is repeated in the daily conversion of souls, both of Gentile and of Jew. That look is the essence of Christian worship, in the approach to God through Christ the crucified; in the continual memorial of Christ's death at the altar; in the observance of holy Passiontide, for which we are again preparing, as the seasons circle round.

And the fulfilment is not yet completed. The 'look' is now spiritual and by faith; but the Master hath said, 'Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.'<sup>1</sup> It is to this stupendous event, at the end of the ages, that St. Augustine more than once applies the passage from Zechariah which is quoted in our text. Did the evangelist hear that prediction by the Master in the Judgment Hall?<sup>2</sup> Certainly that solemn utterance, and the memory of the piercing, give form to his anticipation of the second Advent. He who will come in glory is the same who was rejected and crucified. 'Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.'<sup>3</sup> And yet he does not shrink, appalled by the terror of the event, for he adds, *naï, amen* (*ναϊ, ἀμην*), It is a double affirmation; *naï* (*ναϊ*) for the Gentile, *amen* (*ἀμην*) for the Jew, as St. Paul combines the Semitic *Abba* (*Ἀββᾶ*) and the Greek *pater* (*πατήρ*) in one world-embracing formula of prayer—'the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father' (Ro 8<sup>15</sup>). But St. John's *amen* (*ἀμην*) is more than an affirmation; it is the expression of desire for fulfilment. So it was used by Jeremiah, 'Amen; the Lord do so,' saith the prophet in 28<sup>o</sup>. By St. Paul it is frequently used with the same force, which we also intend by the use of the word as a conclusion to our prayers. And St. John, anticipating with unshaken faith

<sup>1</sup> Mt 26<sup>64</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The 'other disciple,' who followed Jesus into the palace of the high priest (Jn 18<sup>15</sup>), has by some been identified with St. John.

<sup>3</sup> Rev 17.

the certainty of the Advent of the Judge, knew that he had stood before the cross, and had learned there that the Son of Man, who would come to judge the world, had first shed His blood to save the world. Him the Church adores, now in the courts of heaven, as the Lamb

that was slain. She waits for the return of Him, 'that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' Then shall be consummated in fullest sense, and widest application, the prophetic word, 'They shall look on him whom they pierced.'

## Point and Illustration.

### What Criticism does for the Bible.

THE *Spectator* of 12th May contains a review of two recent books on the Church, *Church Problems*, edited by Mr. Hensley Henson, and *The Church Past and Present*, edited by Professor Gwatkin. Its best paragraph is a quotation, made from Mr. T. B. Strong's paper on the effect of modern criticism on the Bible.

The central conviction upon which the use of the Bible rests is, that it is a record of the actual manifestations of God in history. The daily use of it in services and private meditation depends upon a continually varied application of this conviction to the circumstances of the Church and of individuals. The whole of its varied contents becomes available for modern life. By reflection upon it men are able to cast upon their own life the light of God's will. They see how Isaiah or St. Paul dealt with the circumstances of their own day, how the Psalmist expounded in terms of religious feeling the covenant relation with God, how the ideal human life took shape in Jesus Christ. And all this use is possible because the Bible describes real things, and sets forth a relation between God and man that has been, and may be again, verified in experience. Criticism, if we have rightly conceived it, helps to define and articulate this relation. An exact knowledge of the text, for instance, of the Old or New Testament, is a continual preservative against the constant tendency of the human mind to desert the full solidity of Scripture and substitute some abstract and fatally simple theory of its own. So, again, a knowledge of the fairly assured results of historical criticism will make clearer the stages and the various aspects of God's self-manifestation. If, for instance, a certain relation could be established between the Psalms and the history of their period, a vivid picture would be obtained of the way in which religion is applied to life; and this might be an ample reparation for the loss of the traditional idea of David. It might, if it had been established, be a source of practical teaching no less full than the old belief.

### The Great God Pan.

Professor Denney of Glasgow preached the annual sermon before the Baptist Missionary Society on the 25th of April. Speaking of the relation of the Atonement to morality, he said that

historically the Cross of Christ had triumphed—and it was its most singular triumph—over the one persistent, abiding, insinuating force hostile to morality.

What is that force? It is what an acute French writer calls the Great God Pan, the sense that all things are one, that there is a unity in which all differences somehow get lost and pass out of sight; that necessity and freedom, darkness and light, good and evil, what we hope and what we achieve, all these are in perpetual process of interpenetration and transformation into each other—a kind of haze comes over the light, which seems to be generated sometimes by methods that are perhaps indispensable, and yet there is danger attending them in the study both of science and history in modern times. We seem to get into a world of moral haze and flux, where even the distinction of right and wrong is a distinction that you cannot in the last resort insist upon, and I say that is the deepest and most abiding enemy of morals. Even in the common, unintelligent, unreflecting mind, that power works as a kind of mystery of iniquity, where people do not see it in themselves and cannot trace it; and in the world where these things are, in the world where that temptation is operating, the world where we feel like that and speak like that, we come right against the Cross of Christ, the Cross, and One hanging on it, Who died for that difference, died for it, and made it as real as His agony and death, as abiding as the life of 'God Himself.

A good illustration of what the Cross has done for morality was given at the Baptist Missionary meeting this year by the Rev. P. E. Heberlet from Orissa. He quoted the following item from the Indian Penal Code:—

292. Whosoever sells or distributes, imports or prints for sale or hire, or wilfully exhibits to public view any obscene book, pamphlet, paper, drawing, painting, representation or figure; or attempts or offers so to do, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to three months, or with fine, or with both. *Note.*—This section does not extend to any representation sculptured, engraved, painted or otherwise represented on or in any temple, or on any car used for the conveyance of idols, or kept or used for any religious purpose.