

is comparatively unattractive. Learning is often beside the mark. Controversy for the most part repels. But the simple preaching of Jesus Christ and Him crucified will collect a congregation, fill a church, crowd the confessionals, furnish the altar-rail, and solemnize a feast when nothing else will do so. There is not a power on earth to be compared to the simple and unadorned preaching of the gospel.

Studies in the Art of Illustration, by Amos R. Wells (Revell; 3s. 6d. net), promises well, but it drops far behind its promise. Mr. Wells is too wordy. Did he set out to make a great book with the material of a very small one? Still, there are ideas. Here are two illustrations—much condensed in the wording. Is the second one true?

A Christian in Uniform.—Do you remember when Colonel Waring put the New York force of street-cleaners in white uniforms? It is now recognized by all that the efficiency of those workers was vastly increased by this step. The whiteness of their suits was a reminder of their beautiful errand of cleanliness. It was also an emblem to them of the great organization which they must not disgrace. The uniform stood also for authority. Uniforms have worked

wonders for railway conductors, policemen, volunteers, the Salvation Army, hospital nurses, and students. I wonder if you see what I am driving at. It is this: Join the Church: become a Christian in uniform.

He that doeth the Will.—Ask some one to shut his eyes. Take a pair of sharp-pointed scissors, open them so that the tips are about a third of an inch apart, and touch your friend's forehead with them, asking him whether both tips are touching him or only one. He will say, 'Only one.' Keeping the scissors the same, touch the lips or the chin. Now your friend will say, 'Two.' If you experiment on the middle of the back, you will find that you must hold the tips of the scissors two and a half inches apart, if you want to feel them as more than one; the forefingers, on the other hand, tell them apart when only separated one-twelfth of an inch, and the delicate tongue when one-twenty-fourth of an inch is between them. Surely, when I ask you how you feel, you might with propriety respond, 'What part of me?'

What is the cause of this great difference in sensitiveness? Practice, and nothing else. The easiest and surest way to grow hardened to any duty is simply to leave it alone! And if you want to grow skilful in a virtue, practise it. By and by your spiritual touch will become more delicate, and yours will be the execution of a master.

The Old Testament in Teaching and Preaching.

AS AFFECTED BY THE MORE ASSURED RESULTS OF RESEARCH.

BY THE RIGHT REV. HERBERT EDWARD RYLE, D.D., BISHOP OF WINCHESTER.

IN this title distinction is rightly drawn between the work of the teacher and the work of the preacher. Often happily, sometimes unhappily, blended, their special functions are not absolutely identical. The teacher can spoil his work by preaching; the preacher improve his by teaching.

On the present occasion we leave on one side disputable problems. We assume that certain results of research in Old Testament study have been unquestionably attained. What is to be their effect upon the duties of preacher and teacher? I will take the preacher first.

The assured results are of a literary and historical character. They are not subjects which the preacher ordinarily, or even necessarily, handles. The sermon is not a literary lecture. Undoubtedly the preacher must be—is called to be—above all things a student of the Word of God; and by all means let him be intensely interested in its literary aspects; yes, let him become fascinated by archaeological inquiry, by Assyrian and Egyptian re-

searches, by literary criticism. It will all help, when studied in due proportion, to widen the human interest and to cultivate the intellectual powers. But the pulpit is not the lecturer's desk. The preacher is set apart to preach the Word of God; and, though all truth is comprehended in that phrase, he is primarily the preacher of a spiritual message. He declares the gospel of Jesus Christ. His first duty is concerned with the words of Eternal Life.

Nevertheless, his sermon on the Old Testament ought to be based on sound interpretation. The scholarly knowledge of the text is an indispensable aid for any departure from the beaten path of homiletic discourse. The scientific *data* of his exegesis are out of place in the sermon itself. They should remain below the surface—a solid sub-structure—not obtruded upon the view. Literary explanations or historical prefaces, attempted for the purpose of illuminating the situation represented in the text or of deepening the human

interest, need to be simple, vivid, and constructive—not complicated, not controversial, not merely negative. It is a mistake to bewilder the minds of an audience, which rarely includes many special students, with problems in which no vital interest is taken, and for the consideration of which little or no previous training can be assumed.

The preacher on the Old Testament, therefore, is occupied with spiritual, doctrinal, moral, and practical questions—not with the results of research. For him as a pastor and spiritual guide the Old Testament contains the Holy Scriptures as they were used for the same purpose by our Lord and His apostles. The question for him to consider is not how they came into being, but what they are and what their divine message is, and how best it can be transmitted to the hearts of men and women. In the words of my friend and teacher, Bishop Westcott, 'The Old Testament substantially as we have it was the Bible of the Lord and the apostles'; and now, as then, those Scriptures 'are able to make men wise unto salvation'; now, as then, 'are profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness.'

Our Lord's own use of the Old Testament Scriptures should be our continual reminder and inspiration for our practical guidance. It reveals to us the slight and superficial character of our endeavours to employ the Old Testament for spiritual instruction and moral teaching. It rebukes us for our scanty knowledge of its contents, our hasty despair to profit by them, our cowardly retreat into mere questions of antiquity or history and geography as an easy substitute for the deeper significance which is to be sought, and which the Lord always found in the sacred writings.

Let us, therefore, rest assured of the wealth of material for the preacher's use which remains unaffected by the results of recent researches into the Old Testament. Perhaps our very familiarity, or possibly our ignorance, prevents us from realizing the depth and variety of the religious teaching contained in the Bible of the Jewish Church, and enforced in so many ways in prose and poetry, in narrative and exhortation, in proverb and parable. It infinitely transcended the best gifts of Greece and Rome in spiritual power and devotional purity. There stand out the great fundamental principles of religious thought and life; that there is a God, that He is One; that He is a spiritual Being; that

He made the Universe; that He made man in His own image and likeness; that man can hear His word and hold communion with Him; that the world is governed by the law of God's righteousness and love; that man is made to love God and to love his neighbour.

But apart from these vast primary subjects of theology—which perhaps we wrongly assume no longer require enforcing from the pulpit in terms appropriate to the thought of our own day—there are aspects of theological inquiry in Old Testament study which have been in a striking measure modified by modern research.

1. *The Theology of the Old Testament.*—We see now much more clearly than we did a century ago that the theology of the Old Testament must be handled in a strictly historical method. The Old Testament does not anticipate the New. The typology and allegorical interpretations in which the Fathers and Schoolmen rejoiced, failed in accurate exegesis because they lacked the means of historical access to the mind of the writers. The bud is not the full flower; the Old Testament may contain premonitions and supply illustrations of distinctive New Testament teaching. We must not look for proofs, *e.g.*, of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, or of the Resurrection, which were only revealed to us in and through the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The theology of the Old Testament is historically progressive. It rests upon the experiences of Israel's national life, and the revelation of the Divine Nature and Will is continuously interpreted by the men moved by the Holy Spirit. It is a clearly recognized advance from knowledge to knowledge, from grace to grace. The conceptions of the nature of God, of sin, of holiness, of a life to come, grow in distinctness with the progress of the revelation. And the progress of theological thought is being better understood in the light of the more assured results of research into the character and history of the books.

2. *The Morality of the Old Testament.*—The old stumbling-block caused by this subject has practically been removed. The morality of the Old Testament writers is seen, in the light of modern research, as presenting no final or perfect standard. If it is imperfect, it is progressive; it corresponds to the limitations of the time. This is understood in our day; it was not understood by our forefathers. The possession of slaves and the practice

of slavery, the practice of polygamy, retaliatory murder, wars of extermination against the heathen, imprecatory denunciations,—such things have been justified by appeals to the Old Testament. We have learned a better lesson from our studies; and we know it as an assured result that these things faithfully reflect the imperfect yet ever progressive condition of Israelite morality, through which, or in spite of which, it pleased God that the advance should continually be made towards the higher revelation of God's wisdom and love for men. Moreover, a far wider field of moral teaching has been obtained by our better knowledge of the prophetic writings. The prophets live for us in a degree unknown to former generations. In an age when social problems press most urgently, the preacher of Christ is drawing fresh inspirations from the prophets of Israel; and, if for purposes of edification, much of the Jewish law seems 'nigh unto vanishing away,' much in the writings of the prophets has by way of compensation revived with a new life.

3. *Messianic Teaching.*—Many passages that our forefathers could only interpret as predictions of the personal Messiah are now seen to possess a primary reference to contemporary personages or events, and to admit only in a secondary sense of application to the expectation of the Messiah. But if less full of personal prediction, the prophets are found to testify more abundantly to the general Messianic idea. It embraced the whole nation. The hope of redemption and of the kingdom of God filled the thoughts of the faithful. 'The spirit of Christ in the Old Testament,' says my friend, George Adam Smith, 'is not confined to its human heroes and ideals. The length and the breadth, the height and the depth of it, belong to the Old Testament's revelation of God Himself.'

4. *The Divine Revelation.*—Lastly, the belief in a Divine Revelation through Israel is not shaken by modern research. Naturalistic explanations prove wholly inadequate to account for the phenomena. The history of Israel remains unique and unparalleled. To that history the Scriptures of the Old Testament correspond. The Revelation of the Divine Nature and Purpose comes to us through the medium of a unique record, in harmony with the actual experience of national life.

Turn we now to the results which more especially affect the teacher. They are literary and historical. An improved knowledge of the literature and

history, if it has profoundly modified our previous views, has come to the relief of the teacher and the apologist. It has dissipated many doubts; it has caused the abandonment of many false and indefensible positions. I can instance but one or two.

(1) *Questions of Physical Science.*—The old difficulties arising from the futile attempts to reconcile the Genesis account of the Creation and the Flood with the rapid advance of modern scientific knowledge have been removed by modern research. We now know that there existed in the Semitic nations of Western Asia a primitive tradition concerning the beginning of the universe and concerning a great flood. The Genesis account gives the Hebrew version, with which there has been found in fairly close agreement an Assyrian version written in the cuneiform character. Long before Moses, and probably long before Abraham, this tradition of the Cosmogony was well known. The Genesis account tells the famous story in the terms, not of the polytheism or superstition which pervade the Babylonian version, but of the pure Israelite faith in Jehovah. The first pages of our Bible teach neither accurate science nor literal history. But in the simple outlines of the inimitable narrative which reproduces the popular tradition it laid deep the foundations of the first principles of all religion—no primer of science, but the very protevangelium of the Word of God.

(2) *History.*—The historical questions raised by the narrative books of the Old Testament must be answered on their own merits. The early traditions of the nomadic state lead up to the more connected history of the monarchical period. Some points are confirmed and others rendered doubtful by Assyrian study. The Israelite writings are primarily religious in purpose. They furnish the historian with materials for history rather than with history itself. They reproduce a series of incidents selected for the most part for their significance, whether historical or symbolical, in the religious discipline of the people.

The character of the Divine Revelation has not relieved us of any single task or duty in the work of intellectual research. These writings are for our learning in spiritual things. They are not to save us trouble in the human study of literature. And the determination of what is literal history, what allegorical and the like, is not attained by any casual recognition of their inspired character.

'The biblical critic approaches the Scriptures from their literary side by the same methods as he would approach any other ancient writings, if with more scrupulous care and a more present sense of his responsibility' (Westcott).

(3) *Comparative Religion*.—This study has revealed to us the somewhat startling fact that the Israelite worship, its rites and institutions, its sacrificial system, its distinctions of clean and unclean, stood in close resemblance to the worship of other Semitic races. It can no longer be claimed that the externals of the Israelite religion present an absolutely unique feature in ancient religious life. 'The aim of the Hebrew legislation was not so much to create a new system as to give a new significance to that which had already long existed among Semitic races, and to lay the foundation of a higher symbolism leading to a more spiritual worship.'

(4) *Literary Criticism*.—It is under this head that the greatest change of view—and probably the one of most significance—has taken place. The old view assumed that each book was written by one eminent author, until the series was complete and the whole collection was revised by Ezra. That view—so simple and yet so mechanical—was devoid of literary evidence. The books of the Pentateuch and the other narrative books are shown to possess writings of very different style, and to be composite in structure. Some, like Ecclesiastes, Esther, and Daniel, are shown by their language to belong to the latest stage of classical Hebrew.

The compilatory origin of many of the books explains the presence of many minor discrepancies, duplications, and contradictions, for which previously no satisfactory account had been obtained. The laws, which present three or four groupings derived from different periods, are referred back to the first great legislator, Moses, with whose name and work are bound up the foundations of Israelite constitution. The name of David, the sweet Psalmist, is employed in the same way to embrace

many poetical writings of quite uncertain date; while the names of Solomon and of Isaiah were popularly attached to writings that were collected with the Proverbs of Solomon and the prophecies of Isaiah.

(5) *The Jewish Canon of Scripture*.—The collection of the sacred books and their recognition as an authoritative canon was a gradual process, which offers points of comparison with the collection of the New Testament writings. This gradual process seems to have been based on popular religious usage. In the time of our Lord some books, like Esther and Ecclesiastes, were still viewed with suspicion by many Rabbinic teachers. The gradual historic process at the formation of the canon is not without its instructive features. Each book had its own significance and value; each bore its part in the training of the Jewish Church and in the varied preparation for the coming of the Messiah. But the books are neither homogeneous nor equal in value and power; the attempt to regard them as such breaks down. The results of historical inquiry confirm the verdict of common-sense.

The books of the Old Testament have gained in vividness of interest as they have been shown to be more true to history. They may be thought less perfect in accuracy, less encyclopædic in value; but they are seen to correspond more faithfully to the life of Israel. Nor does the fact that they were not exempt from the ordinary processes of origin and composition impair the substantive value of their mission.

They remain the greatest religious literature of any people of the history of the world. Their light was not the true Light, but it heralded the coming of the true Light of the World. Closely as we scrutinize its appearance, and minutely analyze its component parts, we shall not dim its brightness, nor diminish the wonder of its witness; nay, nor be losers by one ray of its joy and consolation, as lone in the dark firmament of the ancient world it hangs over the Inn of Bethlehem.