

a, son of God. Besides that sonship, which we all have by creation, there is another sonship by water and the Spirit. But this is not incarnation, and to accomplish that there is no revealed process, except that by which the Son, Who is the Word of the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, of her substance.

Little did Newman think, when he wrote his first Tract in 1833, that now, in 1903, such things should happen in the Church of England as the pitiful doings at St. Michael's, Shoreditch, and the more pitiful belittling of the Virgin birth of Jesus! But the seed of Tract XC. was in Tract I.; and Tract XC. contained the seed, not only of St. Michael's, Shoreditch, but also of that illusory incarnation which is now being substituted for the birth of the Son of God. If clergymen may explain away the anti-papal Articles, they may explain away the Incarnation. Far as the two explanations may seem from each other, they probably have a common source, and they certainly tend in one direction. If men can no longer be sure that they have a Saviour in the Church of England, some of them will seek one in the Church of Rome. Better, they will say, to believe too much than to remain in a communion whose pastors and masters play fast and loose with the very foundation of Christianity; while others will probably drift away into an aimless and hopeless agnosticism, with no better guide to morals than impulse or fashion.

J. FOXLEY.

ART. V.—THE VALUE OF PROPHECY AS AN EVIDENCE OF REVELATION.

THE final discourses of our Lord to His disciples afford a remarkable illustration of the practical value of prophecy as an evidence of revelation. Three times in these discourses does He impress on them the fact that He was warning them beforehand of what was about to come to pass, in order that, when it had come to pass, they might believe. The first instance is when He is referring to His approaching betrayal. "The Scripture," He said, "will be fulfilled: he that eateth bread with Me, hath lifted up his heel against Me. And now I tell you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He." The second instance is in reference to His approaching departure. "Ye have heard how I said, I go away and come again unto you. And now," He adds, "I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." The third follows in

the same discourse, when He is warning His disciples of the persecution which awaited them. "These things," He said, "will they do unto you because they have not known the Father nor Me. But these things have I told you that, when the time is come, ye may remember that I told you of them." The Apostles were about to witness and to experience circumstances of the strangest and most painful nature. They were to see their Master, whom they believed in as the Christ of God, betrayed by one of themselves, and delivered over to a shameful death; and though He rose again and ascended to heaven in glory, yet when they came forward to proclaim His exaltation, they would be excommunicated by the leaders of their people, and whosoever killed them would think that he did God service. Their hopes and their convictions were thus to undergo a succession of the most grievous disappointments, and the most severe strain would be put upon their faith. What considerations were to sustain them under it? Our Lord gives them various assurances of comfort; but the one which He thus reiterates three times over must have been intended by Him to be of special importance. This was, that nothing would happen to Himself or to them which He had not foretold. They might, therefore, be assured that it was compatible with other truths which He proclaimed to them, and particularly with their belief that He was their Divine Lord and Master. They would have good reason to feel that the trials which befell them, however distressing, were part of a dispensation foreseen and intended by their Master, and their confidence in Him and His guidance ought thus to be the more firmly established.

In these simple words our Lord has supplied the key to the question of the office and use of prophecy. In previous papers the cardinal facts of prophecy and its general nature have been considered. It has been shown how, as a matter of fact, long before our Lord's appearance, it had pointed to the coming of a Person who should fulfil towards mankind the offices which He came to discharge, and also that it had not merely pointed forward to this supreme fact, but that its voice had accompanied every step in the history of the people of Israel, from the time when Abraham was called by this process to leave his Father's house, to the time when Malachi uttered the concluding predictions of the old dispensation. According to the conviction of the Jews of our Lord's day, as illustrated in St. Stephen's speech, the whole life of the Jewish people depended on the truth that the God of glory had from time to time appeared to their fathers, declaring to them at once their destiny and their duty, and upon those revelations of prophecy St. Stephen rested his belief in the

truth he proclaimed, that our Lord had established a spiritual worship which was independent of the local and temporary ordinances of the Jewish sanctuary. This was the settled belief of the Jews of our Lord's day, alike of St. Stephen and the Apostles on the one hand, and of those who rejected their message on the other. The only point in dispute between them was as to the interpretation of those prophecies, not as to their reality.

But let us next consider what is the use which such prophecies serve in the proof of our religion. That they are of momentous importance to it would seem evident from the place which they fill in the sacred volume. Prophecy occupies a larger space there than miracles—it should rather be said than other miracles, for prophecy itself is a miracle, and a standing miracle. But, besides the great place which the books of the prophets hold in the records of the Divine revelation, it is a very striking fact, as Paley has observed, that in the preaching of the Apostles, as recorded in the book of their Acts and in their Epistles, much less stress is laid upon the miracles wrought by our Lord than upon the fulfilment of prophecy in His life, death, and resurrection. The miracles are referred to in passing as things well known. The Jews are reminded that our Lord went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed with the devil. But the main point on which an Apostle like St. Peter lays stress is that “to Him give all the prophets witness.”

This fact suggests the main argument in a series of lectures on this subject, which were referred to in a previous paper, not less instructive than those of Mr. Davison, the “*Propaedeia Prophetica*” of Dr. Lyall, sometime Dean of Canterbury. He says¹ that Paley has correctly observed “that the Apostles must have taken for granted that the miracles ascribed to Christ were known to all their hearers; but he does not add that the medium of proof by which they endeavoured to demonstrate that those miracles had God for their author was altogether drawn from the prophecies of the Old Testament” (p. 157). “The invariable purport of all their arguments, and which they kept always in view, was to prove that the Gospel which they preached was the subject of the *prophecies* with which the Jewish Scriptures were filled, and, so far as appears, it was only this which the Jews denied.” He adds that “the early fathers of the Church do not found the controversy upon the miracles of Christ any more than do the

¹ The references are to the edition of the “*Propaedeia Prophetica*,” published in 1885 by the Rev. G. C. Pearson, M.A., Honorary Canon of Canterbury.

writers of the New Testament. Both of them take these wonderful *facts* for granted, but, for the *explanation* of them, recourse is had only to the Old Testament" (p. 158). Take the leading fathers of the two or three centuries, after the death of our Lord, and he observes with truth that, "while all of them, either directly or by implication, attribute their own conversion to the study of the Old Testament, not one—if we except Arnobius—appeals to the miracles as a proof of Christ's Divine authority" (p. 159). In short, the early apologists of Christianity, though alluding to the miracles of Christ as substantiating their belief, yet vindicate their belief itself, not on this ground, but on the fulfilment of the Hebrew prophecies. It was not, in other words, only the performance by our Lord of wonderful works, but the correspondence of those works, and the claims by which they were accompanied, with the continuous series of prophecies throughout the course of Jewish history, which conclusively evidenced their Divine character and authority.

In illustration of this view of the importance of prophecy, it may be observed, in the first instance, that the simplest prophecies, if fulfilled, afford an unquestionable revelation more direct and more intelligible than any other miracles. Abraham, for instance, according to the Book of Genesis, received the promise that a son should be born to himself and Sarah beyond the ordinary course of nature, and this promise was fulfilled. But its fulfilment at once afforded Abraham an assurance that he was in communion with a supernatural Being. Who that Being was, what was His character and will, he would learn by other communications, but the one fulfilled prophecy assured him that a Being had spoken to him in whose hands were the springs of his life, who compassed his path and his lying down, and who was acquainted with all his ways. The birth of Isaac, however marvellous or miraculous, if occurring without any explanation and standing by itself, would simply have told him that he was in contact with some mysterious force beyond the range of ordinary experience; but it would not of itself have revealed to him either the nature of the force or the character of his relation to it. But when it occurred in accordance with the promise which had been made to him, it at once revealed to him the fact that his life and his destiny were subject to the knowledge and control of the Being by whom that promise was made. As a general rule, in fact, it is not the miracle by itself, but the miracle combined with the command, or the prediction, that it should occur, which constitutes the revelation. In the two combined we witness, not merely a supernatural manifestation, but the manifestation of a supernatural

and intelligent will, and it is this which constitutes the essence of a religious revelation.

It was, we may observe, a mode of revelation which was peculiarly appropriate, and even necessary, to the foundation of religious life and faith in the world. It is possible in the present day, from our intimate acquaintance with Nature, for very powerful arguments to be constructed on a basis of purely natural theology to convince us that the world was made, and is sustained, by a Being of supreme wisdom and goodness. But in the early days of the religious history of mankind such arguments were scarcely possible; and the statement in the Epistle to the Hebrews was peculiarly true, that by faith it was believed that the worlds were framed by the word of God. But nothing could contribute more to produce that faith than that men should have tangible evidence that the course of their own lives and the destinies of their nation were foreknown to, and directed by, a living Being who, in all His communications to them, spoke as the God of all righteousness as well as of all knowledge. A child in a distant country may never have seen its father; but if it receives letters from him from time to time, directing it what to do and telling it what provision will be made for it, and if the promises thus held out to it are fulfilled, it can have no doubt of its being under its father's guidance and control. The case of the Jews, from Abraham downwards, is closely parallel. They were under the Divine education, and they received communications from time to time telling them what was the destiny immediately intended for them, and imposing certain duties on them; and when they found those destinies realized—when, according to the promise, they were brought into Egypt; when, according to the promise, they were brought out of Egypt; when, according to the promise, they were settled in Canaan; when the course of their history there was accompanied by successive predictions, which were successively fulfilled—there could be no doubt to the thoughtful Jews, and there can be no reasonable doubt to ourselves if we believe these facts, that a living God was among them, governing and directing them. It was, above all things, the prophecy that revealed Him. It was this which revealed the design, the will, the wisdom, and the righteousness which were at work among them, and assured them that they were not in contact with blind forces, or with unknown gods, but with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

It may be worth considering whether this does not afford, in great measure, an explanation of one of the most striking circumstances in the history of the Jews—the alteration in their religious character after the exile. Until the time of the

exile they had been perpetually falling back into idolatry, but when they returned from the exile every trace of this tendency seems to have disappeared. They have become a nation of unbending believers in one God, the God of their fathers; and their danger lies no longer in a temptation to worship other gods, or to be false to their law, but in a contrary tendency to exalt their belief and their obedience to the law into a new idolatry. Is it unnatural to suppose that the exile had been to them, as the fulfilment of prophecy, the final proof that the God of whom their prophets had spoken to them was the one living God, and that their whole welfare depended, as had always been proclaimed to them, on obedience to His will and His law? The predictions of the exile, first of Israel and then of Judah, were the culminating prophecies in respect to ancient Jewish history; and their fulfilment, in all the bitterness of the terrible reality, was at least well fitted to set the seal upon all previous prophecies, and to stamp upon the mind of the Jew those truths respecting the nature and the will of the God of his fathers which a less severe discipline had been insufficient to teach him. At every turn of Jewish history the prophetic voice is heard bespeaking the loving guidance and will of God. Those voices, together with their fulfilment, afford the revelation of a living being as distinctly and unmistakably as any distant person not seen by ourselves—to take our Lord's image, as a king in a far country—is revealed by his commands and promises when we see them acted up to and fulfilled. To the Jews after the exile, to the Jews of our Lord's day, this revelation was complete; and nothing was so certain to them as that, at sundry times and in divers manners, God had spoken unto their fathers by the prophets, and that they owed to Him and to His law their absolute allegiance and obedience.

Now, these considerations will further explain the reason why, as we have seen, the arguments of the Apostles are so predominantly concerned with the evidence of prophecy. It was their mission to proclaim a new dispensation, which would, in great measure, supersede the old. The truth was realized more and more by themselves and by others that, in accordance with the charge against Stephen, Jesus of Nazareth would change the customs which Moses, and God through Moses, had delivered to the Jews. Now, it may be admitted that it would have been possible for some stupendous manifestation to have authenticated beyond all doubt this assertion of the close and supersession of a Divine dispensation. It might even be argued that the miracles, the moral authority, and the resurrection of our Lord, did constitute such a manifestation, and were of themselves sufficient warrant for the

abrogation of the Mosaic ordinances. That, indeed, would be a stronger argument to the Gentile than to the Jew, whose whole soul was steeped in the belief of the Divine character of those ordinances. But, at all events, it will be seen that it adds enormously to the force of the works and words of our Lord if it can be shown that those works and words, and the revolution of religious practice which He and His Apostles proclaimed, were themselves not only not contrary to the old law and to the existing dispensation, but actually in harmony with them, and predicted by them as much and as distinctly as the previous revolutions in Jewish history from first to last. If this were so, then, though the Gospel might change the customs which God through Moses had delivered to the Jews, it was not the subversion of them, but the fulfilment of them. It put the coping-stone upon the great temple of Divine revelation, and revealed a perfect harmony from first to last in the Divine will and government. The Jew, after all, was right in demanding some momentous evidence before he consented to the supersession of the law, of which the Divine origin and authority had been stamped upon his mind by so terrible an experience; and it was at least a most merciful, if not a necessary, dispensation that that evidence should be afforded by the very prophecies to which he clung. If those prophecies and that law themselves predicted the Gospel, and foretold the life, the death, and the resurrection of the Saviour, with the spiritual dominion which He was to establish, then the Divine character of the new dispensation was one with that of the old, the purposes and the will of God were unchanged, and the preaching of the Apostles was authenticated by the very Divine oracles to which the Jews appealed.

To quote the striking illustration of Dean Lyall (pp. 171-173), the case may be compared to that of an ambassador who comes from a king in a far country bringing a communication to his subjects, which seems at first of so perplexing and unwelcome a character that they are inclined to doubt his credentials. But suppose, to quote an expression both of Isaiah and Daniel, a sealed document was in the possession of the people, which was not to be opened until such an ambassador arrived, and suppose that on its being opened and read it was found to substantiate the ambassador's credentials, no doubt of his authority would then remain. Prophecy was in the position of that sealed document—or perhaps, we may say, of a document in cipher—which could not be understood until the key was supplied. It at once afforded the Apostles an adequate guarantee that, as the ambassadors of Christ, they were also the ambassadors of the God of their fathers and of the prophets; and that the God of

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had sent *them*, no less than He had sent Moses formerly, with a commission from Himself.

In a word, prophecy, if not the only possible proof, is at least the best and most effective proof that the Christian revelation comes from that one living God who has manifested Himself to us by a continuous series of revelations from the early patriarchal ages down to the time of our Lord and of His Apostles. These things were told us before they came to pass, that when they did come to pass we might believe. Let me further point out that even if, as some writers, like Paley, seem to have thought, the evidence of prophecy be in some respects of less crucial importance to ourselves than it was to the Jews of our Lord's day or to those who lived in the infancy of revelation, yet it still affords a testimony to the primary and cardinal truths of revelation which is of supreme value. What is there for which men ask more anxiously at the present day than for evidence of the presence, and of the action in the course of life, of a living and personal God? Some philosophers and men of science would relegate us to the bare acknowledgment of some supreme but unknown energy from which all things have ultimately proceeded; but they allege that there is no proof of its direct interposition and control in the course of the world of nature, still less in that of life and history. We are tempted, under the influence of this philosophy, to acknowledge a God as a hypothesis, an ultimate law, but to lose the apprehension that He is the Lord our God, and that we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. But if the facts of prophecy are true, they afford us the most direct and positive evidence of this cardinal truth. We hear in them the voice of a Being who has beset us behind and before and laid His hand upon us; who has declared beforehand, in all the great crises of the central history of our race, the end to which that history was tending, and the purpose by which it was governed. You listen to the declaration, before the event, of a deliberate and a righteous design in the history of the world, pointing forward from patriarchal ages to the Christian dispensation under which we now live. There has been much dispute whether the mere fact of the adaptation of the parts of a structure to one end constitutes an adequate proof of its being the product of deliberate design; but if you add to such an adaptation the fact that the end was announced at the very commencement of the adaptation, and that each advance in the growth or development of the structure was similarly announced, and the explanation of its purpose given beforehand, there can then surely remain no reasonable doubt that the structure is the work of deliberate wisdom, and that we

are in communion with the mind and will of the designer. The voice of such prophecy as that of the Scriptures is the unmistakable voice of the living Being, by whom the life and the history which it predicts are controlled, and it forces us to recognise, not merely the existence of God, but His living presence and action. Let me only add that it gives us an invaluable assurance that we ourselves in our daily lives are similarly in the presence and under the guidance of that living God. It affords us a sure and solid ground for our faith in the conviction of the Psalmist: "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect, and in Thy book were all my members written, which day by day were fashioned when as yet there was none of them." It must enable us to exclaim with him: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me."

HENRY WACE.



ART. VI.—WHAT ENGLAND MAY LEARN FROM ITALY.

WHEN in 1870 the Italian nation entered into possession of its capital, the King's Government knew well that it had before it a most difficult task to adjust the relations between the Papacy and the kingdom. In 1866 an opportunity had been given to Italy to cut the links which bound the Church to the Pope, and to establish an independent National Church under its own Archbishops and Bishops, independent of the Papacy and loyal to the State. At that moment the mind of the Italian people was intensely irritated against Pius IX., who had led them forward on the path of political reform, until he found that it was leading to the aggrandizement, not of the Pope as the President of a Federal Italy, but of the King of Piedmont as the monarch of the Peninsula, when he turned round upon his steps, and throwing himself into the arms of the Jesuits, desired Catholics to burn what he had ordered them politically to worship, and to worship what he had ordered them to burn. And this was not the only cause of irritation. While Pius IX. was driven into exile and only restored by French arms, which afterwards supported him, the young kingdom of Italy had been constituting itself, with Florence for its provisional capital. And so keen an antagonism had sprung up between that new kingdom and the